CNMI visitor arrivals up 80% in October 2023. PAGE 2

Lujan appointed Public Defender for Districts of Guam, NMI. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

$1

Dismissal sought for firefighters' suit

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The nine former firefighters who were terminated for refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 previously refiled their lawsuit against the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services and sought the reversal of the Civil Service Commission's decision affirming DFEMS' decision to terminate them. They currently await the Superior Court's decision on the defense's motions for dismissal.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The defense in the ongoing lawsuit filed by nine former firefighters who were terminated for refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 have filed motions to dismiss

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COTA ushers bus line route

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

» As COTA prepares for its Nov. 24 inaugural bus ride

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority will soon be launching what it calls its dual-directional bus route ride called Blue Line on Saipan that will provide public transportation that's going to the north and south sides of the island.

According to Alfreda

See COTA on Page 4

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Alfreda Camacho Maratita, who is the special assistant for public transportation for the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority, poses for a photo with a COTA driver and a staff at the Tottotville Park in Koblerville after bringing along the media Friday afternoon to experience their dual-directional bus route ride called Blue Line on Saipan.

'Biba Red Cross!' rings out at fundraising dinner

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Big hair, shoulder pads, and multi-colored outfits that hark back to the '80s era took center stage last Saturday evening at the Kensington Hotel Saipan, with

See BIBA on Page 4

CHRYSTAL MARINO

The crowds Top 3 favorite outfits of the night with "Musician Rob"(center) taking the best costume prize during the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter's Back to the '80s Party at Kensington Hotel Saipan in San Roque last Saturday.

ON IPI'S CRANE ATOP UNFINISHED CASINO/RESORT PROJECT

Palacios: Liability is too big for the Commonwealth

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

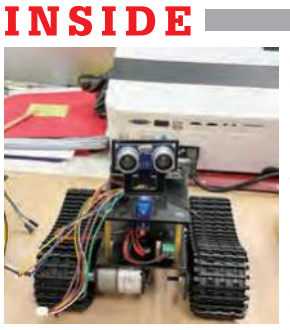
Gov. Arnold I. Palacios said the remaining one of two cranes atop the Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's unfinished resort/casino project in Garapan needs to be removed immediately as the liability is too big for the Commonwealth.

"We're not [going to] continue to sit down around and think around these folks anymore. We've got to get that thing down," said Palacios in an interview last week.

The governor underscored the importance of taking down IPI's tower crane No. 5 in response

See PALACIOS on Page 4

INSIDE



LOCAL
Saipan Community School has offered a robotics and automation class for students led by Systems Integrator of STEMify CNMI Robotics and Automation owner Arnel Gruspe.
PAGE 6

BUSINESS
West Coast Restaurant has joined the suddenly popular lunch buffet trend with the retro- and vintage-theme restaurant introducing a smorgasbord last Nov. 13.
PAGE 11

WORLD
Hundreds of patients, medical staff and people displaced by Israel's war against Hamas left Gaza's largest hospital Saturday.
PAGE 13

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Local

CNMI visitor arrivals up 80% in October 2023

Visitor arrivals to the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota grew 80% to 19,731 visitors in October 2023, compared to 10,934 visitors received in October 2022, according to the Marianas Visitors Authority.

» Arrivals 43% lower than pre-pandemic levels

The October figure is 43% lower than pre-pandemic levels of October 2019, when arrivals reached 34,670 visitors.

In October 2019 58% of total visitors were from Korea and 34% were from China. In October 2023, only 7% of all visitors are from China, underscoring the need to further expand the Marianas' source market mix to increase arrival numbers and revenue generation.

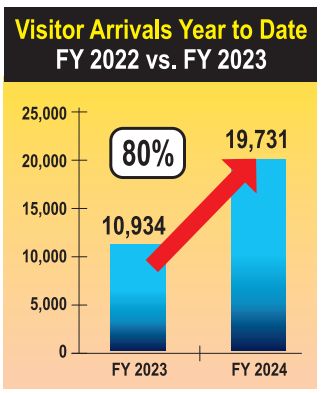
Visitor arrivals from Korea registered 16,374 visitors in October, 82% higher than October 2022. Overall, the Korea market has nearly recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Jeju Air, T'Way, and Asiana Airlines operate a total of 29 regular flights each week to Saipan. With the end of summer and beginning of low travel season, four weekly seasonal flights from Busan by Jeju Air ended in late October and Asiana Airlines also suspended its four weekly flights from Seoul until December. Asiana Airlines will resume service on Dec. 20 with two weekly flights using A330 aircraft during the winter season, adding 110 seats per flight—a 38% increase—compared to the A320 aircraft previously in operation.

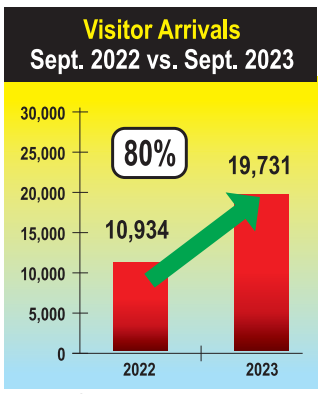
The Marianas received 375 visitors from Japan in October 2023 compared to 230 visitors in October 2022. Overall, the number of outbound Japanese travelers is still 57% lower than pre- pandemic levels—1 million in September 2023 compared to 1.7 million in September 2019. The MVA continues to face the obstacle of Japanese hesitancy to travel overseas due to fears of COVID-19, especially as a large percentage of Japanese children are not vaccinated. With limited flights to the Marianas at this time, Japanese travelers are also having to pay for three nights while staying only two days. In addition to other marketing campaigns, the MVA's ongoing "Marianacation Tabitoku"—or Travel Deal—promotion aims to entice visitors with special offers from United Airlines, local hotels, and MVA member businesses, including the chance to win $1,000 and other prizes in a raffle.

The strong U.S. dollar and weaker Korean won and Japanese yen are also influencing travelers from those countries to choose non-U.S. destinations at this time. Japanese arrivals to Guam and Hawaii were both 78% and 64% lower, respectively, in October 2023 compared to October 2019 before the pandemic.

China arrivals in October 2023 reached 1,289 compared to 21 arrivals in October 2022. Prior to the pandemic, China was the second largest source market of visitors to the Marianas with numerous direct flights a week. Most visitors from China are now free independent travelers transiting via Seoul and Tokyo to the Marianas. The China National Tourism Administration reinstated the Marianas on its Approved Destination Status list in August, allowing package tours and charter flights to the destination once again. The Commonwealth Ports Authority is also requesting the U.S. Department of Transportation to approve a separate number of flights allowed to the Marianas, as before the pandemic and separate from the total quota authorized flights to the U.S.

In October the Marianas also received 750 visitors from Guam, 615 visitors from the United States, and a combined 328 visitors from all other markets. ***(MVA)***





Source: Marianas Visitors Authority

Kilili bill aims to open fed programs to NMI families

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) has introduced a bill that would make Marianas families gain access to the same social safety net programs available to other Americans.

H.R. 6437, or the Fostering Family Cohesion Nationwide Act that Sablan introduced last Wednesday, seeks to extend eligibility for programs under Title IV of the Social Security Act to the CNMI.

Sablan said in his e-kilili newsletter over the weekend that the bill addresses a significant policy inequity by including the Marianas in several programs under Title IV of the Social Security Act, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Child and Family Services; Child Support and Establishment of Paternity; and Federal Payments for Foster Care, Prevention, and Permanency.

The bill's co-sponsors are Delegates Jim Moylan (R-Guam), Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-American Samoa), and Stacey Plaskett (D-Virgin Islands), and Rep. Ed Case (D-Hawaii).

Sablan said the legislation has also won the endorsement of SchoolHouse Connection, the National Association of Counsel for Children, Right to Democracy, Empowering Pacific Islander Communities, and Families Rising.

The bill was referred to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means.

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Lujan appointed Public Defender for Districts of Guam, NMI

SAN FRANCISCO, California—Judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit have selected Leilani V. Lujan as the next federal public defender for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. She succeeds John Gorman, who held the post for 20 years before retiring on Nov. 16, 2023. Lujan begins her four-year term today. She is the first Indigenous Chamorro, first woman, first Pacific Islander and first LGBTQ+ individual to lead the office.

Lujan

"Leilani Lujan is an outstanding criminal defense attorney, whose stellar reputation and commitment to indigent defense will serve her well as the new FPD," said Circuit Judge Kim McLane Wardlaw, who chairs the Ninth Circuit's Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders. "She has the experience, passion, and leadership skills needed to ensure that the office continues to provide the excellent service offered during John Gorman's superb tenure."

Lujan was born on Guam and raised in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. She is a proud Saipan Mt. Carmel School Knight and University of Guam Triton and Truman Scholar. After receiving her Juris Doctor in 1992 from the University of Hawaii, William S. Richardson School of Law, she clerked for the Honorable Simeon R. Acoba, Jr., 12th Division, First Circuit Court of Hawaii.

Lujan has nearly 30 years of practice focused on criminal law and most recently served as an assistant federal public defender and senior litigator in the Guam Federal Defender's Office. Her commitment to indigent criminal defense began in 1994 when she joined the State of Hawaii Office of the Public Defender as a deputy public defender, where she worked in the Oahu and Maui offices.

In 2005, Lujan became a solo practitioner, handling civil, criminal and family law cases. While in private practice, she was appointed by the chief justice of the Hawaii Supreme Court to serve as independent counsel for the grand jury and an arbitrator in the court-annexed arbitration program and served as a member of the First Circuit Court of Hawaii's court-appointed attorney panel. After returning to Guam in 2008, she continued private practice in the local and federal courts until joining the Guam Federal Defender's Office in 2013.

Throughout her practice, Lujan has devoted substantial time to outreach activities and initiatives that help shape laws and programs, including career day presentations in Guam public schools, Guam Girl Scouts Justice Patch Day, Guam public and private school mock trials, Liberation Day naturalization ceremony, Pride Month Discussion, Drug Court Month Education Outreach Panel and Guam Police Department Crime Lab Mock Trial Training. She also has served on the steering committee that implemented the Maui Drug Court, the Hawaii Criminal Charging Procedures Task Force, the Hawaii Permanent Committee on Rules of Penal Procedure and Circuit Court Rules, the Hawaii Penal Code Review Committee, the Guam Jury Instructions Subcommittee and the Guam Ethics Committee.

Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are in the Marianas archipelago in the Micronesia subregion of the western Pacific Ocean. The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands is headquartered in Maite, Guam.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender was created by Congress to fulfill the constitutional requirement that financially eligible individuals charged with crimes in the federal justice system be provided with professional legal representation at no cost. By statute, judges of the courts of appeals select and appoint the federal public defender for a renewable four-year term. In the Ninth Circuit, applicants are evaluated by both a local screening committee and the court's Standing Committee on Federal Public Defenders, applying Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines. Reappointment to additional terms is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the federal public defender's performance, including an invitation for public comment. ***(PR)***

Ocean advocates welcome MacDuff appointment

Local and national ocean advocates are celebrating the Department of the Interior's decision to appoint Dr. Sean MacDuff as the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Superintendent for the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument.

Local and national ocean advocates see MacDuff's appointment as a significant step toward preserving the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, prompting widespread enthusiasm and acclaim.

MacDuff, a renowned marine biologist, will be based on Saipan, bringing his extensive knowledge and passion for marine conservation to this unique and vital ecosystem. His office will be based on Saipan.

"Dr. Macduff is an inspiration to all Indigenous islanders who aspire to pursue academic and professional excellence in marine science. His passion, dedication and expertise will surely benefit the conservation and management of our monument.," said former lawmaker Sheila Babauta, who chairs the Saipan-based nonprofit group Friends of the Mariana Trench.

MacDuff

Ignacio "Ike" V. Cabrer, who is a board member emeritus of the same group, adds his endorsement: "Dr. MacDuff is a good marine biologist contributing to the understanding and restoration of our coral reefs. It's so important that we have a son of the Marianas in this role. I look forward to working with him to protect our ocean."

Laurie Peterka, executive director of the Friends of the Mariana Trench, applauded the appointment: "What wonderful news! Dr. MacDuff is the perfect choice for the superintendent of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument. He has a wealth of experience and knowledge in coral reef resilience and restoration, as well as a deep respect and appreciation for the culture and history of the Marianas."

Angelo Villagomez from the Center for American Progress in Washington, D.C., is similarly excited by the appointment: "Having a leader like Dr. MacDuff at the helm of the monument is what we envisioned 15 years ago when we started advocating for the protection of the Mariana Trench. I am beyond excited that he will be our new superintendent."

Dr. Larisa Ford, retired USFWS and former superintendent of the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument, commended the Department of the Interior's commitment to Indigenous knowledge and leadership: "So pleased that the Department of [the] Interior is putting their commitment to Indigenous knowledge and leadership into effect at the field level! Congratulations, Dr. MacDuff."

According to an FOMT statement, MacDuff's appointment is a testament to his outstanding contributions to marine science and his dedication to preserving the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument. "His leadership is expected to further advance the conservation efforts and protection of this unique and invaluable marine ecosystem." it added. ***(PR)***

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USAF aid sought for maintenance issues at Tinian Health Center, Tinian Aging Center

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Tinian Municipal Council has sought assistance from the U.S. Air Force's 513th Expeditionary RED HORSE Squadron in Andersen Guam, to address maintenance concerns at the Tinian Health Center and the Tinian Aging Center.

Acting Tinian Municipal Council chair Ana Marie C. San Nicolas informed Capt. Matthew C. Jacobs in a letter Tuesday that they need help to repair the leaking roof at the Tinian Health Center, as well as for plumbing and lighting issues at the Tinian Aging Center.

San Nicolas said these issues pose a potential risk to the health and safety of the community's residents and its elderly.

"They need these places to be safe, secure, and conveniently accessible," she said.

San Nicolas said CNMI departments and agencies are now experiencing budgetary difficulties, hence her effort to reach out to the U.S. Air Force.

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Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) hereby gives notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on ***Wednesday, November 22, 2023, at 8 a.m.*** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Board of Professional Licensing Conference Room, BPL Building on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (10/13/2023)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
VII. Director's Report
- 2023 Citizens Centric Report
- CNMI IRT24 (Innovative Readiness Training) Initial Planning Meeting
- Online Payment Update

VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
A. Governor's Office
B. Legislature
X. Old Business
- Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Regulations for Final Adoption

XI. New Business
- HCPLB Regulating Fertility Clinics

XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
A. New Application
- Jennifer Retsinas – Physician
- Ivory Joyce Palmitos – Baccalaureat Social Worker – Examination Request

B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
XV. Announcements
A. Next Meeting Date
B. Adjournment of Meeting

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Probable cause found to try man accused of burning GF's clothes

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The Superior Court has found probable cause to try a man accused of burning his girlfriend's clothes in a fit of rage.

Following a preliminary hearing last week, Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph Camacho found probable cause to try Juan Taitano on charges of assault and battery (domestic violence), disturbing the peace, vandalism, assault, and reckless burning.

The court heard testimony from Department of Public Safety detective Daniel Kaipat.

"…The court finds probable cause to believe that [the defendant committed these crimes] and is therefore held to answer said charges," said Camacho.

Taitano was ordered to return to court for his arraignment on Nov. 27.

During the hearing, the government was represented by assistant attorney general Frances T. Demapan, while assistant public defender Emily Dennert represented Taitano.

According to court documents, Department of Public Safety officers were dispatched to Finasisu Terraces at around 10:28pm on Nov. 3, to respond to a domestic violence and disturbing-the-peace report.

At the scene, police met with the caller who appeared to have a bloody lip and swollen face.

When officers stepped inside the residence, they saw shattered glass on the floor, which the alleged victim claimed was caused by Taitano.

In addition, police said the victim shared a video that Taitano had sent her of him burning her clothes and belongings at a residence in Dan Dan.

Earlier that evening, according to the alleged victim, Taitano was drunk and angry and wanted to take one of the children in the residence to his home in Dan Dan. However, the victim took the child away and told him to leave.

However, the victim said Taitano started to break things inside the apartment before grabbing her head and holding it tightly to his chest. To escape, the victim said she bit Taitano's chest.

After letting go, Taitano allegedly kicked the victim's leg and swung a fist at her, hitting her in the arm. In addition, the victim said Taitano head bumped her mouth before she managed to grab her phone and call the police. When Taitano saw she was calling the police, he left.

Later that evening, police found Taitano at his residence in Dan Dan. Police said they recognized Taitano from a photo the victim had shared so they arrested him and brought him to DOC.

COTA

From page 1

Camacho Maratita, who is the special assistant for public transportation for COTA, the northbound fixed bus route will start at Tottotville Estate and end at the American Memorial Park. It will be making stops at 64 stations along the way.

The southbound fixed bus route, on the other hand, will run from the Paseo de Marianas in Garapan all the way to Tottotville Estate. It has 31 stations.

To familiarize the public to this new bus service, Maratita invited the media on Friday afternoon to experience the ride aboard a COTA bus during the northbound and southbound rides. She was joined by members of the Office of the Governor's Information Office aboard the bus.

Maraitita said the inaugural Blue Line 1B will start this Friday, Nov. 24, and rides will be free for the rest of the year.

Beginning on Jan. 1, 2024, though, the regular fare is $1. For students, veterans, active-duty military, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities, fare is 50 cents.

Operation hours are Monday through Friday, from 6:30am to 8:30pm. Weekends and holidays is 6:30am to 8pm.

Maratita said everything is federally funded through their federal grants agency, the Federal Transit Administration.

She said 10 Americans with Disabilities Act accessible buses were awarded through a competitive grant under the Bus and Bus Facilities Program Section 5339 under the Federal Transit Administration.

Each bus has 20 seats. If someone with a wheelchair is to use a seat, it will go down by two seats.

Maratita said the buses have a bike rack so anyone that is interested in taking service for a bike ride is welcome to join them.

She said there was a pilot program that was launched back in 2017 and that covered Route 1A.

Maratita said they had the opportunity to assess what worked, what didn't work, and realized there was more traction on Route 1B.

"So this is what we wanted to focus on," she said, referring to Blue Line 1B route.

She said it did take a couple of years again to revisit the program, only because they suspended the services due to austerity measures back in 2019 and 2020. Then COVID-19 pandemic hit, so they had to suspend it indefinitely.

"So we're really happy to be able to relaunch this again," Maratita said.

She said this is a blessing for everyone that lives here, everyone that needs to get to and from their doctor's appointments, to school, places of leisure, grocery shopping, catching movies, or just about else that people want to do.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

BIBA

From page 1

over 300 people packing the venue at the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter's Back to the '80s fundraising party.

With several different individuals pulling off different versions of Madonna, to various rock stars, retro Barbies and Kens and even an island version of Prince himself, the crowd, music, costumes and the nostalgia for the '80s were not the only vibes that filled the room.

As the fundraiser coincided with the NMI Chapter's 45th anniversary, the event was also filled with ringing cries of "Biba, Red Cross!" and messages of appreciation for the impact and presence of the American Red Cross' local chapter over the years. Among the video recorded messages from the chapter's supporters and both past and present board members, one video included American actress Lea Thompson of *Back to the Future* fame, who extended her personal thanks to the tireless effort of the NMI Chapter, and a greeting for happy 45th anniversary.

In a conversation with the chapter's director, John Hirsh, he said the venue was completely sold out. "We had 320 seats to sell and we sold all of them, so we're very excited about that. …Whenever you have an event like this, some people don't show, they have a conflict or something like that, but they came out and supported us and bought tickets so we sold out all the tickets."

Hirsh said they are hoping to raise around $90,000 from the event.

As the last of the NMI Chapter's annual two-part fundraiser, Hirsh said this one late in the year had been different from their usual Club 200 fundraiser, which usually sees a larger crowd of about 1,200 people.

"But due to difficulties in the economy and the workforce, it's really hard for us to hold an event that large, so we scaled it back and came over to our partners at Kensington, and they've been a great host to us," he said.

Also, with a tropical depression warning hoisted over the CNMI, Hirsh said they had to hold the event indoors. Although that meant a smaller crowd, Hirsh said they would also have avoided a downpour had it rained.

The chapter's business operation coordinator, Selmalyn Taitano, said, "It's really nice for us to see the community come together and support a good cause and I hope they continue to do so in the future."

Hirsh said the CNMI has had so many storms over the years and the Red Cross has invested millions of dollars in recovery efforts, providing assistance to families whose homes have been damaged and need that extra lift "and the Red Cross has been there." He said they will continue to give assistance where there is a need.

PALACIOS

From page 1

to *Saipan Tribune*'s request for comments about the Commonwealth Casino Commission board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero's request last Sept. 9 to use an unspent $250,000 so CCC could hire an executive director and five other personnel to assist the commission for three months.

Palacios disclosed in the interview that Attorney General Edward Manibusan had advised him to hold on to that money and recommended taking care of IPI's crane first.

Whether he will use that money to remove the crane or use it for another purpose, Palacios said Manibusan advised him to have that crane taken down—whether the removal is done through the Department of Public Works' procurement process or IPI doing it themselves.

"But it has to come down," he said.

As for IPI's claim that it hired a company to take down the two cranes, the governor doubts whether IPI will indeed do that.

"IPI said a lot of [other] things too. That's where we're at," he said.

Howyo Chi, IPI's new manager/director, told the casino commissioners during CCC board's monthly meeting last month that IPI has hired a company that will dismantle crane tower No. 5 and 6 at no cost to DPW or the CNMI government.

Palacios said the CNMI is continually being put in a quandary.

"In the meantime, that thing is deteriorating. God forbid that there be another typhoon or something happens to the crane and somebody gets hurt or people's properties get damaged. We cannot rest until that thing is down," he said.

If IPI has a contractor that will do it, then that's good, Palacios said, but IPI said that about three or four months ago.

Last Oct. 5, DPW Building Safety official Yvonne B. Tenorio issued a notice of actual and immediate danger to IPI, requiring that crane No. 5 be deconstructed/or disassembled as it poses an imminent threat to public safety and properties.

Crane No. 5, which looms over Hibiscus Street between the IPI casino/resort building and Joeten Hafa Adai, has reportedly not been used since December 2020.

Tower crane No. 6 faces the beach.

DISMISSAL

From page 1

the suit with the Superior Court.

Joseph Horey, who represents the nine former firefighters, said in a statement the defense in the case has filed three different motions to dismiss the lawsuit and the fate of the case now rests in the Superior Court's hands.

"The government defendants have filed three different motions to dismiss, and all three have been heard by the court. Two were heard on June 14 and one on Aug. 21. So right now, we are just waiting for the court to issue a decision. If our case survives these motions to dismiss, we will keep on fighting for reinstatement," he said.

Horey said he and his clients remain optimistic about the Superior Court's pending decision as other courts have started to show a better understanding of similar issues, now that the COVID-19 pandemic panic has subsided.

"We are hopeful of a favorable decision. It seems that, after some initial pandemic panic, courts have come to a better understanding of these kinds of issues. For example, the New York Supreme Court recently found that a New York City vaccine mandate violated equal protection because it applied only to government workers, and not to the private sector. That is one of the same arguments that our firefighters made. So we think we have a solid case, and will prevail in the end," he said.

The former firefighters were terminated for insubordination following their refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccine as required by the CNMI Governor's Directive 2021-002 issued on Feb. 18, 2021.

The firefighter first sued the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services and then-DFEMS chief Dennis Mendiola, but they later asked the court to dismiss the case with prejudice so they could refile the case. The Civil Service Commission had also affirmed the fire department's decision to terminate the nine.

The nine then refiled their lawsuit against DFEMS and sought the reversal of the CSC's decision.

The nine former firefighters—Paul Acebedo, Jose K. Angui, Allen T. Calvo, Cain C. Castro, Algernon A. Flores, Derek B. Gersonde, Shawn DLR Kaipat, Philip Kalen, and Adam J. Safer—refiled their lawsuit at the Superior Court in December 2022.

Changes made to the refiled lawsuit include naming acting DFEMS commissioner Jesse Mesa as a defendant in place of Mendiola and adding the CSC as a defendant.

In their refiled suit, the plaintiffs asked the Superior Court to reverse the CSC decision and asked the court to issue an order finding their termination "invalid and unlawful." They also want an order to hold their terminations unlawful and to set that aside.

In addition, the former firefighters are seeking an injunction reinstating them to their pre-termination positions, with back pay, leave, and benefits from the date of their termination.

In addition, the lawsuit is asking for an undetermined monetary award and damage for emotional distress.

In September 2021, Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho granted the request of the parties in the case to dismiss without prejudice the lawsuit. The parties agreed to dismiss the case without prejudice, which meant it could be refiled.

The court found that the former firefighters tried to short-circuit the administrative process and did not engage fully with the administrative process and exhaust all administrative remedies available to them when they filed their lawsuit simultaneously with their appeal.

On Aug. 3, 2022, the CSC denied the former firefighters' appeal and affirmed the fire department's decision to terminate them.

USCIS: Additional H-2B visas available for FY 2024

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor published Friday a temporary final rule making available an additional 64,716 H-2B temporary nonagricultural worker visas for fiscal year 2024, on top of the statutory cap of 66,000 H-2B visas that are available each fiscal year.

American businesses in industries such as hospitality and tourism, landscaping, seafood processing, and more turn to seasonal and other temporary workers in the H-2B program to help them meet demand from consumers. The supplemental visa allocation will help address the need for these workers in areas where too few U.S. workers are available, helping contribute to the American economy.

The temporary final rule also advances the Biden Administration's pledge, under the Los Angeles Declaration for Migration and Protection, to expand lawful pathways as an alternative to irregular migration.

By making these supplemental visas available at the outset of fiscal year 2024, the departments will help ensure U.S. businesses with workforce needs are able to plan ahead and find the seasonal and temporary workers they need.

At the same time, DHS and DOL are reinforcing robust protections for U.S. and foreign workers alike, including by ensuring that employers first seek out and recruit American workers for the jobs to be filled, as the H-2B program requires, and that foreign workers hired are protected from unscrupulous employers.

Recently, both DHS and DOL proposed regulations to further strengthen worker protections in the H-2A and H-2B visa programs, and the White House-led H-2B Worker Protection Taskforce released a report detailing new actions to be taken by federal agencies to strengthen protections for vulnerable H-2B and similarly situated U.S. workers.

The H-2B supplemental includes an allocation of 20,000 visas to workers from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras. This country-specific allocation is part of the Biden-Harris administration's efforts to build a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system that includes expanding lawful pathways for migration while strengthening consequences for those without a legal basis to remain in the United States.

In addition to the 20,000 country-specific allocation, 44,716 supplemental visas will be available to returning workers who received H-2B visas or were otherwise granted H-2B status during one of the last three fiscal years. The rule allocates these supplemental visas for returning workers between the first half and second half of the fiscal year to account for the need for additional seasonal and other temporary workers over the course of the year, with a portion of the second half allocation reserved to meet the demand for workers during the summer season. The semiannual cap of 33,000 H-2B visas authorized under the Immigration and Nationality Act (statutory cap) for the first half of fiscal year 2024 was reached on Oct. 11, 2023.

The supplemental H-2B visas have been divided into the following allocations:

- First half of fiscal year 2024 (Oct. 1 to March 31): 20,716 visas are immediately available to returning workers —those who were issued H-2B visas or held H-2B status in fiscal year 2021, FY 2022, or fiscal year 2023, regardless of country of nationality. These petitions must request employment start dates on or before March 31, 2024.
- Early second half of fiscal year 2024 (April 1 to May 14): 19,000 visas are limited to returning workers—those who were issued H-2B visas or held H-2B status in fiscal years 2021, 2022, or 2023, regardless of country of nationality. These early second half of fiscal year 2024 petitions must request employment start dates from April 1, 2024, to May 14, 2024.
- Late second half of fiscal year 2024 (May 15 to Sept. 30): 5,000 visas are limited to returning workers—those who were issued H-2B visas or held H-2B status in fiscal years 2021, 2022, or 2023, regardless of country of nationality. These late second half of fiscal year 2024 petitions must request employment start dates from May 15, 2024, to Sept. 30, 2024.
- For the entirety of fiscal year 2024: 20,000 visas are reserved for nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador, and Costa Rica, regardless of whether such nationals are returning workers. Employers requesting an employment start date in the first half of fiscal year 2024 may file such petitions immediately after the publication of this temporary final rule.

The H-2B program permits employers to temporarily hire noncitizens to perform nonagricultural labor or services in the United States. The employment must be of a temporary nature, such as a one-time occurrence, seasonal need, or intermittent need. Employers seeking H-2B workers must take a series of steps to test the U.S. labor market. They must obtain certification from DOL that there are not enough U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified, and available to perform the temporary work for which they seek a prospective foreign worker, and that employing H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed U.S. workers.

The maximum period of stay in H-2B classification is three years. A person who has held H-2B nonimmigrant status for a total of three years must depart and remain outside of the United States for an uninterrupted period of three months before seeking readmission as an H-2B nonimmigrant.

DHS and DOL are committed to protecting all H-2B workers from exploitation and abuse, and to ensuring, consistent with law, that employers do not refuse to hire or appropriately recruit U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified, and available to perform the temporary work. The temporary final rule implementing this allocation features several provisions to protect both U.S. and H-2B workers.

Petitions requesting supplemental allocations under this rule must be filed at the USCIS Texas Service Center. Petitions filed under the supplemental allocations in this rule at any location other than the Texas Service Center will be rejected, and the filing fees will be returned. ***(USCIS)***

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

WILLIAM KAIPAT RABAULIMAN, individually and as Administrator of the ESTATE OF MANUEL SAURES KAIPAT, Plaintiff, v. VICKY JEAN CASTRO, the HEIRS OF GUILLERMO LITULUMAR SAURES, the HEIRS OF ANTONIO SAURES, and the HEIRS OF VICTORINO SANTOS CASTRO Defendants.	CIVIL ACTION NO. 21-0323 ORDER TO APPEAR AND PLEAD

IT IS ORDERED that the Heirs of Antonio Saures shall appear and plead in this matter on December 4, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 205A.

SO ORDERED this 16th day of November, 2023.

/s/
KENNETH L. GOVENDO,
Associate Judge

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

Request for Proposals

Management of the Koblerville Property and Gymnasium

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is soliciting for proposals from qualified and established organizations or agencies to operate the Koblerville gymnasium.

The proposal packets are available at the NMHC Central Office Saipan located in Garapan during regular business hours from Monday thru Friday except CNMI Holidays beginning November 20, 2023.

A mandatory pre-proposal meeting will be held on November 29, 2023, at 10 a.m. at the NMHC Central Office Conference Room. Failure to attend the pre-proposal meeting will be considered a non-responsive proposer/offeror. Therefore, submission of a proposal from non-responsive proposer/offeror will not be accepted.

The proposal would be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Qualification and Experience: 30 points
2. Organization and Capacity: 30 points
3. Financial Capacity: 20 points
4. Response to RFP: 20 points

Proposers must seal and mark their proposals "NMHC Koblerville Gymnasium 2023". Proposers must submit one (1) original and two (2) copies of sealed proposal and submitted to the NMHC Central Office, Garapan, no later than 10:00 a.m. on December 20, 2023.

The NMHC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and waive any defects in the said proposals, if in the sole opinion of NMHC, to do so would be in its best interest. All proposals become the property of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation.

For more information, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

COMMONWEALTH JUDICIARY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Guma' Hustisia / Ilimwal Aweewe / House of Justice
P.O. Box 502165 ▪ Saipan, MP 96950
Telephone (670) 236-9700/9800 ▪ Facsimile: (670) 236-9702
Website: www.NMIjudiciary.com

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Judiciary is seeking a highly motivated individual for the position of:

FAMILY COURT MANAGER

On the island of SAIPAN
Announcement # JVA24-001

DUTIES: The successful candidate will work under the direct supervision of the Presiding Judge of the Commonwealth Superior Court and under the direct supervision of the designated Family Court Judge. The candidate is responsible to plan, manage, administer, coordinate, and implement operations and activities of specific programs within the Family Court Division. The incumbent in this position is required to perform the following duties and responsibilities:

- Functions as program liaison of the family court, to the community and to the ancillary programs;
- Organizes, plans and directs the daily operations of the Family Court Division to ensure that the appropriate court services are provided as required by the Judges and court policies.
- Develops and manages programs and services that will promote and enhance the efficient delivery of judicial services within the Family Court Division to include the development of necessary procedures, rules, regulations and operating manuals for the Division.
- Supervises the following administrative staff; administrative assistant (s), Workforce Investment Agency trainees, co-op program candidates, and others as assigned. The duties include their supervision, performance evaluation, orientation of said new employees, and other related functions.
- Assists the Superior Court in securing funds and other resources necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the Family Court Division.
- Maintains a status calendar of all cases under the Family Court jurisdiction as specified under Public Law 9-51. Assists in the collection and compilation of statistical data affecting the Family Court Division, its cases and related projects.
- Participates in preparing and analyzing court policies, procedures and programs to ensure compliance with applicable statutes and submits recommendations for the purpose of improving court services to clients.
- Assists in the review of proposed legislation and court rules affecting the Family Court Division and prepares written summaries
- Prepares various types of administrative reports and correspondence on assignments/projects and program activities of the Family Court Division.
- Assists the Superior Court in preparing the annual operations and personnel budget of the Family Court Division.
- Represents the Family Court Division at community and civic organizations as directed.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS: The Family Court Manager should have a Bachelors of Science or Bachelors of Arts Degree or equivalent from an accredited institution, plus a minimum of three (3) years of professional and managerial experience involving the implementation, coordination, and supervision of program activities with demonstrated professionalism maintaining confidential records and statistics.

Candidate must provide current police and traffic clearances and proof of eligibility to work in the CNMI. Must have a valid drivers' license and operate a court vehicle. Applicants given a conditional offer of employment with the CNMI Judiciary will be required to submit to urinalysis to screen for the illegal use of drugs prior to employment. "Illegal drug" means a substance whose use or possession is controlled by federal law but that is not being used or possessed under the supervision of a licensed health care professional. (Controlled substances are listed in Schedules I-V of 21 C.F.R. Part 1308.)

Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet the job qualification requirements if the applicant can show that foreign education is comparable to education received in accredited educational institutions in the United States.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide such evidence when applying for Judiciary jobs. Education received in foreign colleges or universities will be considered if the candidate submits an evaluation of the coursework from: (a) an accredited U.S. college or university; or (b) a private professional organization specializing in interpretation of foreign educational credentials.

COMPENSATION AND TENURE: This position is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the Presiding Judge. The salary range will be $52,500 – $57,750 annually.

INTERESTED PERSONS PERSONS Application forms are available at the Judiciary Administrative Office at the Guma Hustisia/Ilimwal Aweewe/House of Justice in Susupe, or at the Superior Court offices on Kotten Tinian and Centron Hustisia in Rota during normal business hours except on weekends and holidays. Completed applications, cover letter, and three references to:

NMI Judiciary
Human Resources
Guma' Hustisia/Ilimwal Aweewe/House of Justice
P.O. Box 502165
Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. (670) 236-9818
Cell. (670) 783-8592
Fax. (670) 236-9702
hr.judiciary@NMIjudiciary.gov

This job announcement will remain open until filled and can be seen and a printable copy of the application downloaded at http://www.nmijudiciary.gov

The Judiciary reserves the right to rescind or cancel this JVA at any time without notice.

THE CNMI JUDICIARY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

[1] The following organizations evaluate foreign educational credentials for employment and other purposes. All operate on a fee based on the extent of the education to be evaluated; applicants shall bear the cost of evaluation.
(a) Credentials Evaluation Service P.O. Box 24679 Los Angeles, CA 90024
(b) Education Equivalency Evaluation World Education Services P.O. Box 745 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10011
(c) Education Credential Evaluators, Inc. P.O. Box 17499 Milwaukee, WI 53217
(d) International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. 914 Pickett Lane Newark, DE 19711
(e) Foundation for International Services, Inc. P.O. Box 230278 Portland, OR 97223.
While the Judiciary offer these addresses as information to applicants who request assistance in obtaining an evaluation of foreign education, these services are not preferred over others which may exist.

Gruspe starts 2nd robotics, automation class at SCS

By RANIEL SANTOS
ralphdaniel.santos@uap.asia
CORRESPONDENT

Saipan Community School has offered a robotics and automation class for students led by Systems Integrator of STEMify CNMI Robotics and Automation owner Arnel Gruspe.

This marks the second time Gruspe has conducted a robotics and automation class at SCS, the first time being in 2021.

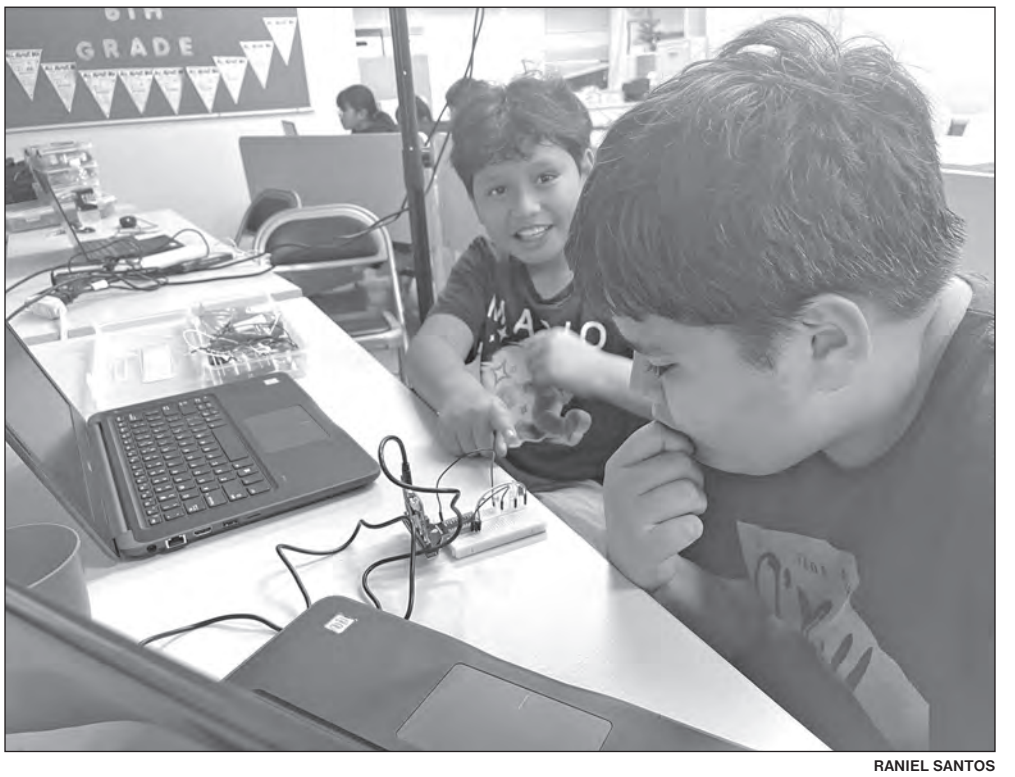
He told *Saipan Tribune* that this robotics project was a year and a half in the making through the Northern Marianas College initiative SEED to Sail, which awarded start-up money to those who had the best pitch for a business. He pitched the idea of robotics and automation training for kids and he was selected as one of SEED to Sail's Top 5.

SCS principal Amanda Dunn is excited over this latest collaboration with Gruspe.

"Both as a learner and school principal I love embracing technology in education! Robotics for example opens the door for students to not only express their creativity but also to engage in complex problem-solving on a grander scale, fostering a dynamic learning environment."

RANIEL SANTOS

Sixth graders Jina Chun, Hiyori Okuma, and Micaela Tenorio assemble their robot during Saipan Community School's second robotics and automation class.

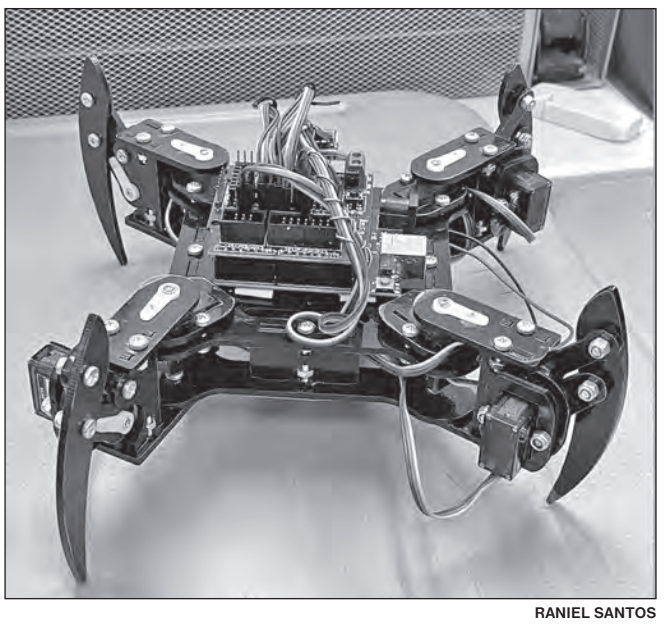


RANIEL SANTOS

Alex Diaz and Sam Pangelinan working together on their light.

RANIEL SANTOS

Gruspe showing a robot car to the students.



RANIEL SANTOS

Gruspe's robotic spider creation.

Gruspe taught 6th-8th grade students of SCS different things: automation, coding, and motor controls by using both hardware and software. The 6th graders used blocks in programming while the 7th and 8th grade students did actual coding which involved typing in certain letters and configurations to get the robot to move.

In every class, he patiently demonstrated to the junior high students how to program and assemble robots from cars to even music boxes. Their final project in the future would be a robot Tesla car or a self-driving car, an application of all that they had learned from the program.

As to his assessment, Gruspe shared that the students navigated through the program with flying colors. Some of the students expressed frustration at first because they could not make it work, but eventually they were able to have it functioning in no time.

Many of the students expressed their delight in having the robotics program.

Emma Sablan, an 8th grade student, shared, "It's great. We learn how to code and learn about new technology."

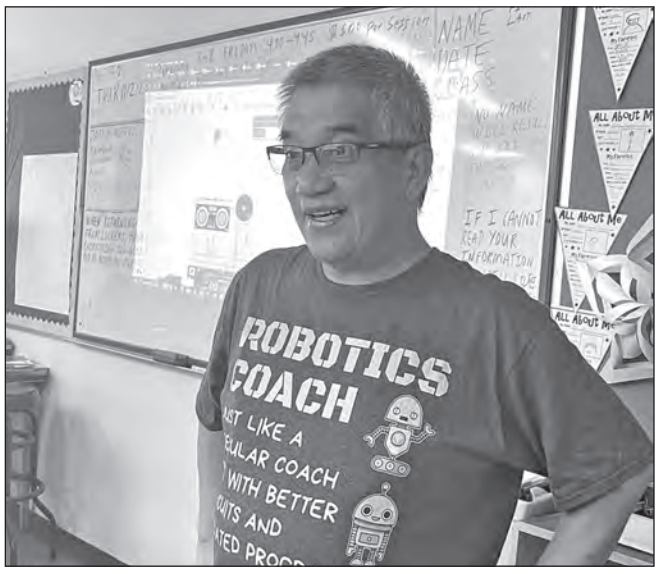
Mickaella Yang, a fellow 8th grader, added that the program helped them "learn about the C-language (programming), the blocks, and learn new parts about it as well as the inside of the robot by using different apps such as Tinkercad."

Gruspe stressed that the timeliness of this program could not have been any sooner. He explained, "Every year technology changes, and right now it is Industry 4.0 wherein welders are not the physical ones anymore… they're now robots. Industry 4.0 is also the year of artificial intelligence."

Having programs like this would therefore provide an upper edge for students to understand how technology and electronics work in a world where the technological landscape is ever-changing. He added, "This would be beneficial for the students if they decide to become a telecommunications engineer, or an electrical engineer," he added.

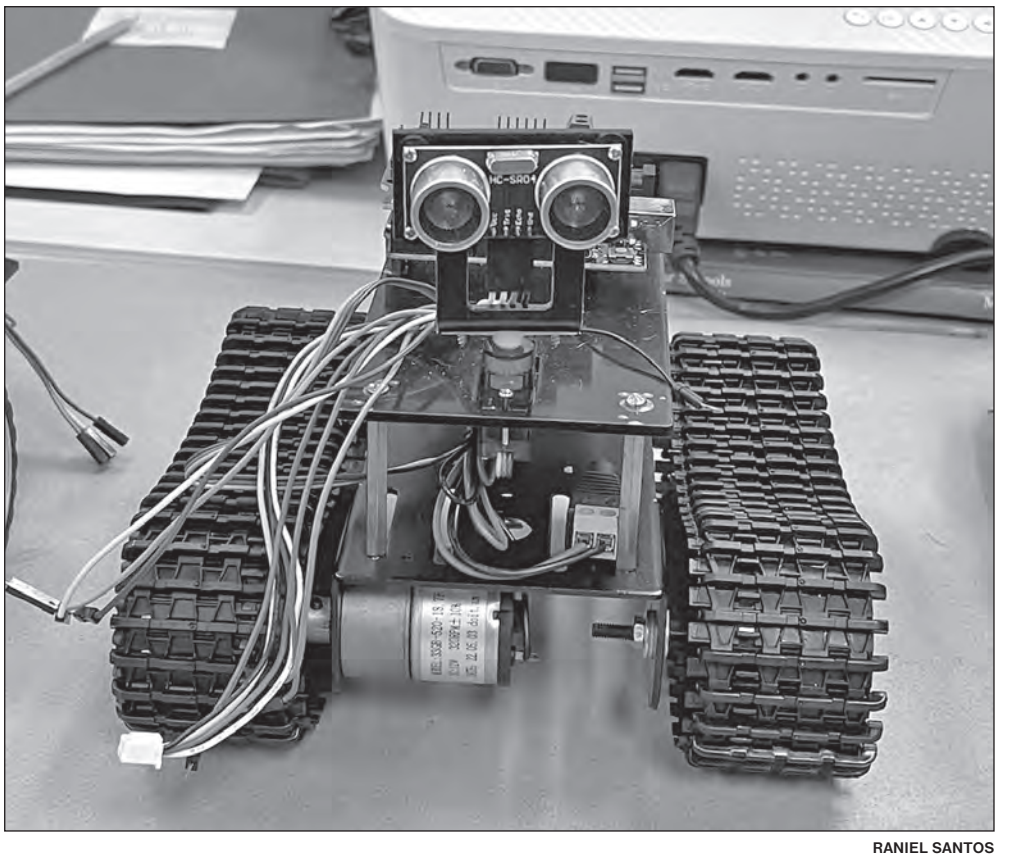
Gruspe also shared that eventually there would be an open house for parents to come and see what the students have assembled through the robotics program.

Gruspe's 45-minute Robotics and Automation Training classes are held every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.



RANIEL SANTOS

Systems Integrator of STEMify CNMI Robotics and Automation owner Arnel Gruspe, who dubs himself the robotics coach, instructs the class.



RANIEL SANTOS

Gruspe's robot creation definitely has Disney Pixar character Wall-E vibes.

500 Sails welcomes new leadership team

500 Sails is in the midst of a remarkable and exciting transition. 500 Sails was started in 2014 by co-founders Pete and Emma Perez (familian Gollo) who came to the Northern Marianas with a dream of bringing back our Chamorro canoes.

As they learned more about the community the dream grew to include both maritime traditions in the Marianas—Chamorro and Carolinian. Major funding was secured; partnerships were made—first with the Department of Lands and Natural Resources, then the Indigenous Affairs Office; canoes were built and voyaging started with the generosity of Carolinian master navigators and seafarers who shared their sailing knowledge; a five-year strategic plan was developed; and the Cultural Maritime Training Center was launched providing U.S. Coast Guard training tracks, American Red Cross lifeguard training tracks, and Sailing & Voyaging tracks.

Coleman Jr.

500 Sails was honored to assist Carolinian master navigators so they would have access to students, facilities, canoes, and more so they could teach traditional navigation. This has resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Marianas College/Community Development Institute to add traditional navigation to its certificate programs. The community programs have included over 20,000 hours of swimming, building, and sailing—all for free.

Guerrero

After nearly 10 years of growth, 500 Sails has become a well-established, maturing organization, but it was rapidly outgrowing its management structure. Wanting to avoid "founder's syndrome," where nonprofits outgrow their founders, Pete and Emma Perez began to prepare 500 Sails for the voyage ahead. New members were recruited for the 500 Sails board of directors and their passion and skills energized the committees. With the new board in place, the Perezes began the process of stepping out of their leadership roles and into supportive roles for a new executive management team selected by the board.

500 Sails' new executive director, Milton "Jun" J.F. Coleman Jr., took the helm on Nov. 13. He will be joined by the new managing director, Christopher Guerrero, in January 2024. To ensure a smooth transition, Emma Perez will mentor both as she continues to work with the board as board secretary. Pete Perez will also support the new executive team and will become the full-time boatyard manager.

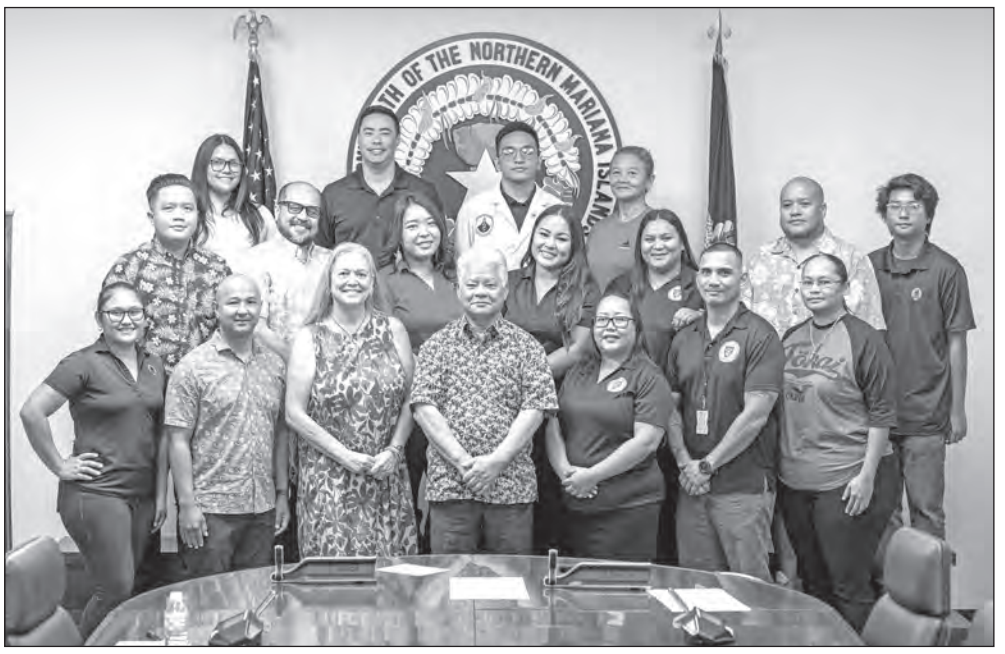
With the new executive management team in place, guided by a strong board of directors with the support of 500 Sails' founders, 500 Sails has the leadership it needs to navigate the next decade. Master navigator Cecilio Raiukiulipiy's recent comment on the leadership change is encouraging. "You guys are leading the steps, not stepping away. Our community needs to see your steps and follow. Just like the navigator who's leading the crews and teaching says, if the mast stands straight and withstands the strong wind, the crews will be strong and straight."

Prior to assuming the executive director position, Coleman was 500 Sails' director of Sailing and Seamanship. His background as a canoe cultural practitioner is extensive. As a young volunteer in the 1990s working on the construction of the 54' voyaging canoe Hawai'iloa, Coleman became apprenticed to master Hawaiian canoe builder Wright Bowman. With Bowman's blessing he then spent six years building and sailing canoes under the tutelage of beloved Dr. Pius Mau Piailug. Coleman has voyaged on the Hokulea, Makali'i, Hawai'iloa, and Simion Hokulea. He was initiated this year as a master navigator in the Pwo ceremony on Satawal under the Weriyaeng school of navigation. He is looking forward to the opportunity to guide 500 Sails, "I have a holistic approach and clear strategic vision for the organization as it journeys forward, expands its' reach, and establishes itself as a lead organization furthering its tremendous positive impacts on our indigenous peoples, island communities, economy, environment, public/private sectors and a multitude of industries."

Guerrero will be joining 500 Sails as managing director in early January. He will be transitioning to Saipan from San Diego where he is active in the Chamorro community as a documentary video and drone photographer. Guerrero was raised in Guam and the diaspora and has a deeply felt desire to promote and protect Chamorro culture and traditions. He brings to 500 Sails a track record of successful entrepreneurship, including founding Proa Athletics, a sports performance training facility that he built from the ground up. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from Louisiana State University and an Associate of Applied Science in Business Administration. Asked how he felt about leaving the business he nurtured to nurture 500 Sails, he said, "I'm putting down one sail and raising 500!"

500 Sails is a 501©(3) and CNMI tax-exempt nonprofit organization dedicated to reviving, promoting, and preserving the maritime cultural traditions of the Mariana Islands through community engagement in canoe cultural values and activities. 500 Sails' vision is a healthy thriving native community that has successfully integrated traditional cultural values into modern life. Major supporting partners include the CNMI Office of Indigenous Affairs, and IT&E. ***(500 Sails)***

CNMI celebrates apprenticeship growth


NMC

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, CNMI Department of Labor Secretary Leila Staffler, Northern Marianas College president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, NMTECH CEO Jodina Attao, Apprenticeship sponsors and supporters unite to proclaim National Apprenticeship Week, coordinated by NMC State Apprenticeship Expansion Program and CNMI DOL WIOA.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang proclaimed the week of Nov. 13-19, 2023, as National Apprenticeship Week to recognize the vital role that Registered Apprenticeships play in providing opportunities to the people of the CNMI by allowing apprentices to earn while they learn and preparing a pathway to good, quality jobs and well-paying careers.

"Registered Apprenticeship programs are a proven way to train a skilled workforce and meet the changing needs of our economy," said Palacios. "During National Apprenticeship Week, we encourage employers and job seekers to learn more about the benefits of participating in a Registered Apprenticeship program."

Registered Apprenticeship programs offer a variety of benefits and incentives to employers and apprentices, including a structured training program that meets the specific needs of the employer, on-the-job training and experience, a pipeline of qualified workers, increased productivity, and the opportunity to earn while they learn.

Geraldine B. Sasamoto, the Northern Marianas College State Apprenticeship Expansion program manager, said the Registered Apprenticeship program plays a role in cultivating a resilient, homegrown workforce.

"By blending education and hands-on training, we're nurturing local talent to meet our community's specific needs without leaving the CNMI," Sasamoto said. "With the imminent formalization of the State Registered Apprenticeship to come, the aim is to establish the program as a practical tool for our industries, as well as empowering our own and ensuring a skilled workforce rooted in the CNMI."

"Apprenticeships are not just training programs, they are cornerstones to building a skilled and adaptable and as our favorite word, resilient workforce," said Labor Secretary Leila Staffler. "In our rapidly evolving economy, where technology and innovation continue to redefine industries, apprenticeships serve as a linchpin to ensure that our workforce remains [competitive]."

Joe C. Guerrero, Saipan Chamber of Commerce board chair and the owner of Naked Fish Bar and Grill, said the Registered Apprenticeship program in the CNMI is great for businesses like his, and that there's multiple opportunities within the program.

"I, along with the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, fully support the apprenticeship program and have been meeting with the Department of Labor and her team to really come together and see how the business community can help these programs flourish," Guerrero said. "I'm very motivated not only as a sponsor of this program, but as my role in the Chamber. I'm really passionate about pushing and building opportunities from here."

Emma Perez, interim operations director of Marianas Alliance Of Non-Governmental Organizations and co-founder of 500 Sails, encourages the business community to join the Registered Apprenticeship program.

"Why is [apprenticeship] important? Because people can get skilled," Perez said. "Let's figure it out and get these resources to get our people trained and in good jobs and move forward."

For more information about the Registered Apprenticeship programs in the CNMI, contact NMC's Community Development Institute at cdi@marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONGRATULATIONS!

Officers of the 17th Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council congratulate Dr. Anita Borja Enriquez, second from left, who became the 12th president of the University of Guam during an investiture ceremony at the University of Guam Calvo Field House in Mangilao last Nov. 14, 2023. This makes Enriquez only the second Chamorro woman to hold the top post at the university. In photo, from left, are Marian DLG. Tudela, municipal council chair; Enriquez; Tonie M. Tudela, municipal council vice chair; Dr. Sharleen Santos-Bamba, interim senior vice president and provost accreditation liaison officer, UOG; and Dr. Alicia Aguon, dean of the School of Education, UOG.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Cease-fire now. The killing in Gaza must stop

It has become impossible to distinguish between Israel's decidedly non-surgical operation against Hamas militants in Gaza and the indiscriminate killing of Palestinian civilians. When so-called humanitarian pauses in the bombardment and ground operations are too brief to realistically permit innocents to flee, or when there is no place for non-combatants to go that is not also in the line of fire, such pauses are so deficient as to be meaningless.

It is time for a cease-fire. It is time for the Biden administration to assert strong and sustained pressure on the government of Benjamin Netanyahu to stop attacks that have reportedly already killed more than 11,000 Gazans. The world cannot stand by to witness more slaughter of civilians.

No one should harbor illusions about Hamas, the radical militant organization that serves as the de facto Gaza government and began the current hostilities with its murderous Oct. 7 surprise attack on Israeli civilians. Militants killed about 1,200 people and continue to hold more than 200 hostages— Israelis, Americans and others.

Israel claims Hamas has used Shifa Hospital as a command center and weapons warehouse. Although Israeli soldiers who entered the hospital were able to produce little evidence of that, there is no reason to doubt that Hamas would treat Palestinian civilians as human shields.

But Hamas' atrocities do not justify atrocities in kind. Following Hamas' initial attack, Israel instructed the people of northern Gaza to leave their homes and made no commitment that they would ever be able to return. Israel's reprisal destroyed homes and cut off power and communications, making it impossible for survivors of the bombing even to search for the remains of family and neighbors beneath the rubble.

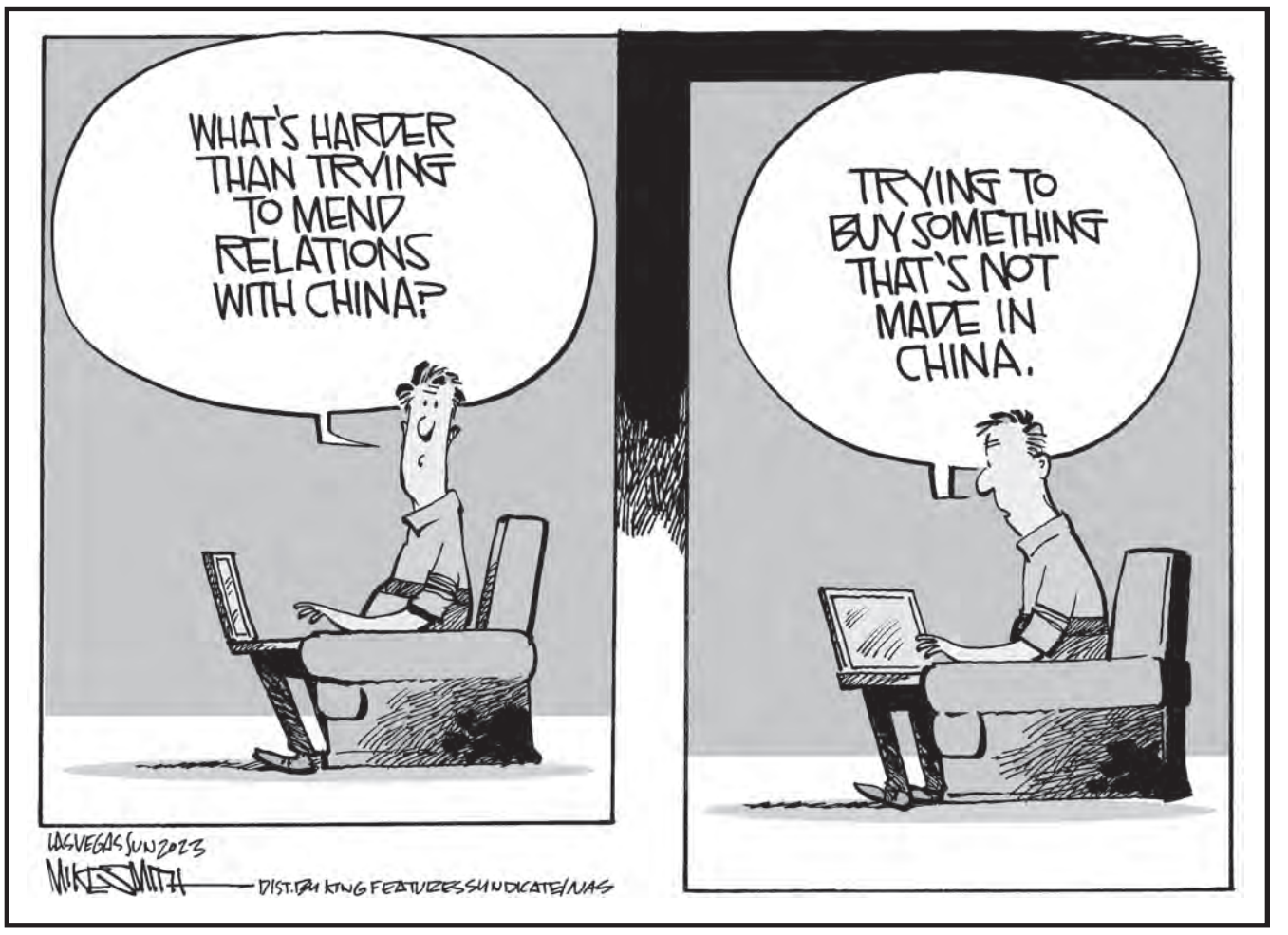
Now Israel is signaling that it will step up its assault in southern Gaza, into which much of the territory's population of more than 2 million have crowded in response to the warnings to flee the north. They will not be permitted to enter Egypt on Gaza's southwestern border, and they cannot enter Israel. They are trapped.

Already, more children have died in Gaza in the last month than in all other conflicts around the world this year, according to Save the Children. That cruel fact is one of many that have turned world opinion against Israel, and against the U.S., its chief ally and the provider of most of its weapons. The consequences for both nations will last generations. The trauma inflicted on Palestinian survivors only increases the recruiting ability of Israel's enemies, whether they be Hamas, Hezbollah or any successors bent on destruction of Israel.

On Wednesday, the United Nations Security Council approved a resolution calling for "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors" in Gaza for "a sufficient number of days" to allow unhindered access for agencies delivering aid. The U.S. did not vote in favor of the resolution, but importantly, also did not veto it. Still, pauses and corridors mean little if they are immediately followed by a resumption of deadly attacks.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken testified at an Oct. 31 Senate hearing that a cease-fire would "simply consolidate what

See CEASE-FIRE on Page 9


WHAT'S HARDER THAN TRYING TO MEND RELATIONS WITH CHINA?
TRYING TO BUY SOMETHING THAT'S NOT MADE IN CHINA.
LAS VEGAS SUN 2023
MIKE SMITH
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The slaughter of civilians in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza shows us a new age of mass violence

By EUGENE FINKEL
Los Angeles Times

Eugene Finkel is an associate professor of international affairs at Johns Hopkins University and the author of the forthcoming book Intent to Destroy: Russia's Two-Hundred-Year Quest to Dominate Ukraine.

Since Hamas' attack on Israeli civilians on Oct. 7 and Israel's retaliation, global attention has shifted from Ukraine to the Middle East. But while we are transfixed on Gaza, large-scale violence against civilians is also taking place elsewhere.

In the former Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh nearly the entire population had to flee, becoming refugees in the wake of Azerbaijan's decisive victory in a conflict that lasted over two decades. In Ukraine, investigators constantly uncover new and ever more gruesome evidence of war crimes, torture, rape, kidnapping of children and intentional targeting of civilians as part of Russia's genocidal campaign. In Israel and Gaza, 1,200 Israelis and more than 11,000 Palestinians lost their lives in a bout of violence that includes atrocities, indiscriminate targeting, bombings and hostage taking, leading to claims about a potential genocide or genocidal massacres committed by the warring parties.

In Sudan, more than 360,000 civilians recently became refugees to escape mass violence and crimes against humanity carried out by the Rapid Support Forces amidst the country's civil war. In the Balkans, Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are on the brink of violent armed conflict. These and other cases of mass violence are all parts of an emerging global wave. A new age of ethnic cleansing and mass murder is upon us, and more horrors are coming.

All these conflicts have unique local causes and dynamics. Yet, different though they might be, they are also connected. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's efforts to challenge the U.S.-led global order emboldened and empowered other actors, such as Iran or Serbia. The rupture between Moscow and the West prevents a coordinated international action to restrain and contain emerging conflicts.

All forces that are perceived by the Kremlin as hostile to the West can now count on Moscow's diplomatic backing in the United Nations and are cheered by Russia's global propaganda machine. Some might receive financial support and access to Russia's military technologies. In places such as war-torn Sudan, the Kremlin's involvement is even more direct, with Russian mercenaries arming and training those engaged in crimes against humanity.

Global attention to Ukraine, and now Israel and Gaza, provides other actors, such as Azerbaijan, an opportunity to accomplish their maximalist goals without the fear of being in the spotlight or provoking international reaction. And when the war in Ukraine ends, the masses of Russian soldiers, accustomed to committing atrocities, will provide ready and cheap muscle for armed groups and conflicts elsewhere.

Genocide and ethnic cleansing offer politicians what might seem like an easy solution to complex problems. There is no need to compromise and negotiate—concepts that radicals and populists abhor—if there is no one left to compromise with. In an era of increasingly polarized and intolerant politics and growing perceptions of existential threats— from opposing military alliances, different ethnic groups, religions, ideologies or identities—the eliminationist message becomes appealing. And most crucially, the international community and the U.S. in particular seem both unable and unwilling to do anything about this trend, even as the perpetrators face only minimal consequences or none at all.

The U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the broader framework of the international humanitarian law, which were designed to prevent mass atrocities, never ensured compliance, but now they seem utterly irrelevant and detached from actual events. Scarred by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S.—the only country with the resources and capacity to stop mass murder anywhere on the globe—has lost the appetite for such actions. But without the U.S., prevention of mass atrocities is doomed. Scholars and experts imploring states and armed groups to stop violating international law and collective statements warning of potential genocide or ethnic cleansing have little effect.

The record of accountability and punishment for atrocities is no less abysmal. Thus far, Russia's well-documented crimes against humanity produced only two indictments by the International Criminal Court and zero arrests of key perpetrators. It is unlikely that Putin, one of the two Russian officials indicted by the ICC, will ever face justice. The main impact of the indictment was just to limit Putin's ability to travel abroad. The likelihood of other leaders, Russians and others, to ever face justice is equally low.

Can this global wave of mass violence be stopped or reversed? Probably not. Neither the U.S. nor NATO is likely to start commit-

See SLAUGHTER on Page 9

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Another war, another forced relocation. Why can't we make room for peace on this vast planet?

By PATRICIA STECKLER
THE BALTIMORE SUN

I'm confused.

In second grade in the 1950s, my teacher taught us that Columbus discovered America. We learned about the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa Maria, the three ships captained by Columbus that rode the rough seas from Spain to our land in 1492. The crew battled perilous conditions and scurvy, the vitamin C deficiency that wreaked havoc with their health. Then, these brave men came on land, founded our country, and dubbed it the New World.

Too shy to speak up, especially to raise uncomfortable questions, I kept mum, wondering, What about the Indians? Weren't they here first? Throughout my school years, this same tale of Columbus discovering America was the only one told in our history classes and texts. Over and over, we sang a song with the refrain, "In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue and found a place called America." Confused and upset but still awkward about speaking up, I stayed mute through high school.

Decades later, this version was replaced by a more accurate one that relied on research, DNA evidence, and a mission for truth and reconciliation. Long overdue, Native Americans recaptured their rightful first place in the history of North America as the Indigenous people who'd populated the Western Hemisphere for tens of thousands of years.

And then I learned about the Trail of Tears, the forced relocation of Indigenous people, beginning in the 1830s. Until then, Native Americans had cultivated and lived on millions of acres in the Southeast for generations. Federal laws confiscated their lands and gave them to European settlers for cotton growing. Our original people were forced to leave for "Indian Territory," a dry, dusty region beyond the Mississippi. Their journey West was treacherous and cost thousands of lives due to disease, harsh weather, thirst and starvation.

I've been confused and horrified many times in my life by forced dislocations of people from their homelands, pushed out of their homes, often violently away from their communities, and sent off with no place to go. This is the history of Black Americans: first enslaved, often separated from their families, always mistreated, never compensated, and finally sent off with nothing.

And the Holocaust. And, more recently, Ukraine.

Now, it's Hamas and Israel at war. A vicious attack by the armed Palestinian group, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, Canada and the European Union, killed 1,200 Israelis on Oct. 7, leveling their homes and slaughtering them in the streets by using terroristic tactics reminiscent of the Holocaust. Understandably, Israel is retaliating, but with a force that's destroying north Gaza, driving out thousands of noncombatant Palestinian civilians who have nowhere to go. It's 75 years after Israeli independence, when Palestinians were first removed from their homes and communities, literally marginalized to the outskirts of what became the state of Israel. Once again, I'm confused and upset.

Perhaps I'm still the second-grader who couldn't grasp why our native people weren't acknowledged as the original Americans. Or why they were removed from their rightfully owned lands. Our Earth is enormous, with underpopulated regions and vast waterways. Why can't we make room for one another and live peaceably together?

I'm not a historian. I'm not a politician. I'm a Jew. My grandparents and great-grandparents fled Belarus, Austria and Germany when antisemitism targeted and displaced them, and the threat of annihilation was rampant. I'm also an American and deeply grateful that my family has found a mostly safe haven here in the United States. (I say "mostly" because antisemitism is on the rise.)

I'm also a 71-year-old woman who believes everyone should be honored, embraced and valued. And I'm deeply grateful that my life is filled with diversity. I've been married 44 years to a wonderful Zoroastrian man from India. I live in a community with people of all ages, income levels, languages, religious beliefs, sexual orientations and national origins. (In my Maryland county, one-third of the 1 million population are foreign-born.) That fact makes my heart happy.

Call me naive. Say I'm disloyal to my Jewish roots. Disagree with me. But please, please, please, pause for a moment to ponder the preciousness and majesty of human life. We can live together on this grand planet, can't we?

Patricia Steckler has been a psychologist for 38 years and is a 2019 graduate of the Johns Hopkins Science writing master's degree program.

The 'who' and the 'why' of chronic student absenteeism are key

By COLYN RITTER
Tribune News Service

Colyn Ritter is a research associate at EdChoice, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization working to advance educational freedom and choice for all students as a pathway to successful lives and a stronger society.

As our country reflects on the decisions made to close schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the severe damage it did to students' academic progress, it would be easy to assume students being out of school is a problem of the past.

It would be easy, but it would also be wrong.

As it turns out, while schools have reopened and returned to normal, millions of students are missing.

According to a recent report from Stanford University, chronic absenteeism, defined as when students miss roughly 18 days of school year, is on the rise in 40 states across the country. In the 2021-22 school year, there were 6.5 million more students chronically absent than in the 2018-19 school year, an increase of roughly 14%.

The problem does not appear to be going away anytime soon. In fact, initial estimates from 2022-23 data imply chronic absenteeism will remain extremely high. An analysis from Attendance Works and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University forecasts chronic absenteeism in 2022-23 to be roughly 28%, nearly double the pre-pandemic rate.

But it isn't just the rate of change that is different, it is also the populations of students who are chronically absent.

Historically, students with learning disabilities and students living in poverty were more likely than other students to be chronically absent. As chronic absenteeism has grown massively post-pandemic, it has become more frequent among minority and LGBTQ teens, according to a recent survey of teens conducted by EdChoice and Morning Consult. When surveyed in August, an alarming 19% of teens self-reported missing more than 15 whole days of school. But among Black teens, as well as those from the LGBTQ community, 25% reported missing more than 15 whole days of school in the past school year. It's important to note that these are snapshots of data at a single point in time. It is still very concerning, however, and we desperately need more data parsing out which groups of students are chronically absent.

Mental health appears to be playing a role as well. According to a recent student survey from the EdWeek Research Center, 16% of students who were absent for at least one day in the past year (for reasons other than physical illness) said they didn't attend because of anxiety. Another 12% reported feeling too sad or depressed to attend school. Anxiety was the second most common reason among students for missing school, trailing only bad weather as the top reason.

Recent EdChoice and Morning Consult polling supports this as well. For example, 27% of teenagers feel their school harms their personal happiness. One-fourth of teens indicated they are feeling "overwhelmed." When asked whether they feel their mental health is supported by their school, only 37% of teenagers felt supported.

There is no playbook to rely on to address an extremely high rate of chronic absenteeism coming out of a pandemic. Identifying effective solutions can't happen without necessary information regarding the "who" and the "why" of chronic absenteeism.

As abundant data exist showing students' mental health and academic success have eroded as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be naïve to ignore the possibility that these realities have a role to play in the increase of chronic absenteeism rates. Early detection and increased engagement are some of the solutions in the past that have shown positive effects in curbing chronic absenteeism. But, as the problem has grown to an unprecedented level, it is fair to wonder whether the tools used in the past are still effective. That is one reason why this new reality is so worrisome.

The problem of chronic absenteeism is unlikely to improve anytime soon. The approaches relied upon in the past to fight chronic absenteeism are almost certainly not going to suffice given the growth of the problem. There is no world where the proper academic recovery can begin without a serious understanding of, and proactive approach to curbing, chronic absenteeism. Every second counts.

CEASE-FIRE

From page 8

Hamas has been able to do and ... potentially repeat what it did another day." But neither Israel nor the U.S. has explained how Hamas can be eradicated or removed from power without an unacceptable level of civilian deaths and casualties. Nor have they set forth what they intend to happen next. Israeli occupation?

On his visit to Israel in the wake of Hamas' initial attack, President Biden noted that the U.S., following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, made mistakes. The statement was a clear message to Israel: Don't blunder as we did. Don't squander the goodwill of the rest of the world by killing civilians. Don't mimic your enemy's cruelty. Don't leave a power vacuum that can be filled by other, even more potent enemies. Have an exit strategy.

Remaining mindful of America's mistakes, it is incumbent upon the Biden administration now to avoid complicity with Israel's. We are past the time to excuse the horror in Gaza. Biden has to press Netanyahu hard to stop the mass, indiscriminate killing. That starts with a call for a cease-fire.

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SLAUGHTER

From page 8

ting resources to saving lives in faraway places. Actors that ignored international law will not suddenly begin abiding by it, and the conflict between Russia and the West precludes a possibility of a broad-based international action.

But the West can still reduce the destructiveness of this violence. The first task is to recognize that while each case of mass violence is different, they are also interconnected, and addressing the sources of one will help reduce others. Limiting the ability of Russia or Iran to export violence will have effects beyond Ukraine or the Middle East. Influencing and, if needed, restraining allies is as necessary as taking action against adversaries. Substantial investment in accountability and punishment is cheaper and less controversial than military intervention, but might force perpetrators to rethink their policies.

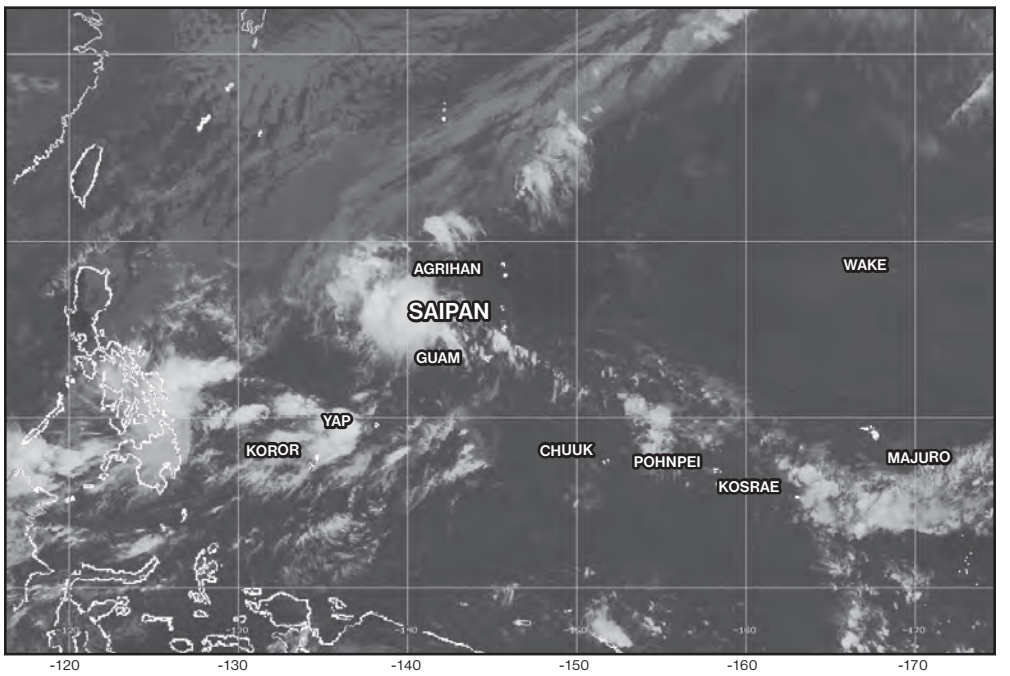
At some point, the combined impact of images, testimonies and evidence of unspeakable suffering might make the public more willing to take prevention and intervention against mass violence seriously. Until that happens, even limited policies can save the lives of thousands. We owe them that.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly sunny with isolated showers. Southeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 80°	86 77°	86 77°	86 77°	86 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 6:29 AM, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate to fresh southeasterlies prevail in the region. Satellite imagery and Doppler radar indicate patches of showers bubbling up over Guam and Rota coastal waters. The buoys show seas are between 6 and 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 77°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 77°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 81°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Cloudy	70° / 61°
Beijing	Fair	59° / 31°
Hong Kong	Fair	72° / 61°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	83° / 73°
London	Sunny	45° / 36°
Los Angeles	Sunny	74° / 57°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 77°
Melbourne	Rain	79° / 57°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	81° / 75°
New York	Showers	53° / 45°
Osaka	Showers	63° / 50°
Paris	Mostly Sunny	46° / 34°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	61° / 37°
Rome	Rain	54° / 41°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	69° / 45°
San Francisco	Showers	59° / 44°
Seoul	Sunny	50° / 34°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	66° / 52°
Washington, DC	Showers	52° / 44°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:20 AM	5:43 PM
Tuesday	6:21 AM	5:43 PM
Wednesday	6:21 AM	5:43 PM
Thursday	6:22 AM	5:43 PM
Friday	6:22 AM	5:43 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	12:30 PM	-	-
Tuesday	-	12:15 AM	1:14 PM
Wednesday	-	1:13 AM	1:55 PM
Thursday	-	2:09 AM	2:35 PM
Friday	-	3:04 AM	3:15 PM

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
6:44 AM	Low Tide	-0.28
2:36 PM	High Tide	1.76
8:32 PM	Low Tide	1.15
-	-	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:30AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

West Coast Restaurant hops on buffet bandwagon

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

West Coast Restaurant has joined the suddenly popular lunch buffet trend with the retro- and vintage-theme restaurant introducing their very own eat-all-you-can offering last Nov. 13.

The Susupe restaurant's management said they introduced the lunch buffet to offer a diverse dining experience for their customers.

West Coast Restaurant's buffet typically includes a variety of salads, hot entrees, desserts, and more and stands out with the buffet menu's unique blend of flavors and carefully curated dishes, setting it apart from other buffets on the island.

The typical smorgasbord fare changes day to day, but the staples include chicken afritada, basa fish with butter lemon sauce, loco moco (burger steak), fried chicken in sweet chili sauce, Filipino-style pork steak, breaded mahi, and mixed pancit.

The buffet offering could also have potato salad, seafood salad, macédoine salad, a variety of sushi, vegetable cream soup, red and steamed rice, and seasonal fruits.

Management said the West Coast Restaurant has been getting rave reviews since starting the lunch buffet last Monday.

"The reception has been positive, with customers enjoying the wide range of options available...The feedback from customers has been favorable, and we appreciate the support."

The lunch buffet, which is from 11am to 2pm, costs $15 for adults and $8 for children ages 5-10. Children 5 years old and below dine for free.

West Coast Restaurant is located beside Saipan World Resort along Beach Road in Susupe.

For further inquiries or reservations on West Coast Restaurant's daily lunch buffet, call (67) 234-0037.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
West Coast Restaurant is located beside Saipan World Resort along Beach Road in Susupe.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
West Coast Restaurant's loco moco and mixed pancit.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
West Coast Restaurant's seafood salad and macédoine salad.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
West Coast Restaurant's chicken afritada and basa fish with butter lemon sauce.

Bella Wings Express launches home delivery business with partner Good To Go

TUMON, Guam—Today marks a significant milestone in two homegrown companies' commitment to provide delivery access to everyone in Guam. Bella Wings Aviation and Good To Go are pleased to announce a strategic partnership combining BWA's delivery business initiative, called Bella Wings Express with Good to Go's extensive delivery network to transform the way goods are transported and received. BWA's system will allow for everyone in Guam to have access to home deliveries no matter where they live.

Hermosa

In an era where convenience and efficiency are paramount, BWA and Good to Go are committed to providing a seamless and reliable delivery experience for individuals and businesses alike. This innovative approach to home delivery will ensure that packages ordered online or shipped from outside of Guam will reach their designated destination with unmatched precision.

"We understand the importance of reliable and efficient transportation in today's fast-paced world, and we are excited to be at the forefront of this innovation that will give everyone an address. This takes us one step closer to the realization of making drone deliveries within Guam that will incorporate a point-to-point consumer delivery with a fully integrated digital payment system," said Charlie Hermosa, CEO of BWA.

"Our commitment is to provide unparalleled delivery solutions that redefine convenience and exceed customer expectations, allowing the customer to set their own delivery time and much more," he added.

Good to Go We Deliver has been providing food delivery services islandwide for over 11 years and recently launched GoodToGo Rides, a ride-hailing service. This partnership with Bella Wings Express leverages their fleet's coverage of Guam.

For more information, contact Bella Wings at info@bellawingsaviation.com or www.bellawingsaviation.com/bellawingsexpress. ***(PR)***

IBM, EU, Disney, others pull ads from X as concerns about antisemitism fuel backlash

Advertisers are fleeing social media platform X over concerns about their ads showing up next to pro-Nazi content and hate speech on the site in general, with billionaire owner Elon Musk inflaming tensions with his own posts endorsing an antisemitic conspiracy theory.

IBM, NBCUniversal and its parent company Comcast said this week that they stopped advertising on X after a report said their ads were appearing alongside material praising Nazis—a fresh setback as the platform formerly known as Twitter tries to win back big brands and their ad dollars, X's main source of revenue.

The liberal advocacy group Media Matters said in a report Thursday that ads from Apple and Oracle also were placed next to antisemitic material on X. On Friday it said it also found ads from Amazon, NBA Mexico, NBCUniversal and others next to white nationalist hashtags.

"IBM has zero tolerance for hate speech and discrimination and we have immediately suspended all advertising on X while we investigate this entirely unacceptable situation," the company said in a statement.

Spokespeople for Comcast and NBCUniversal confirmed on Saturday that the companies had "paused" their advertising on X but did not provide additional details on the decision. Media Matters said it found ads for NBCUniversal's Bravo network and its brand agency Catalyst next to antisemitic or white nationalist content.

Apple, Oracle and Amazon did not immediately respond to requests seeking comment.

The European Union's executive branch said separately Friday it was pausing advertising on X and other social media platforms, in part because of a surge in hate speech. Later in the day, Disney, Lionsgate and Paramount Global also said they were suspending or pausing advertising on X.

Musk sparked outcry this week with his own tweets responding to a user who accused Jews of hating white people and professing indifference to antisemitism. "You have said the actual truth," Musk tweeted in a reply Wednesday.

Musk has faced accusations of tolerating antisemitic messages on the platform since purchasing it last year, and the content on X has gained increased scrutiny since the war between Israel and Hamas began. ***(AP)***

Nation

Biden signs a bill averting a gov't shutdown for now

» With Israel and Ukraine aid still stalled

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—President Joe Biden signed a temporary spending bill a day before a potential government shutdown, pushing a fight with congressional Republicans over the federal budget into the new year, as wartime aid for Ukraine and Israel remains stalled.

The measure passed the House and Senate by wide bipartisan margins this week, ensuring the government remains open until after the holiday season, and potentially giving lawmakers more time to sort out their considerable differences over government spending levels for the current budget year. Biden signed the bill Thursday in San Francisco, where he was hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

AP

President Joe Biden speaks about student loan debt forgiveness, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Oct. 4, 2023, in Washington, D.C.

News of the signing came late at night. The president signed the bill at the Legion of Honor Museum, where he held a dinner for APEC members.

The spending package keeps government funding at current levels for roughly two more months while a long-term package is negotiated. It splits the deadlines for passing full-year appropriations bills into two dates: Jan. 19 for some federal agencies and Feb. 2 for others, creating two dates when there will be a risk of a partial government shutdown.

The two-step approach was championed by new House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Republican, and was not favored by many in the Senate, though all but one Democrat and 10 Republicans supported it because it ensured the government would not shut down for now.

Johnson has vowed that he will not support any further stopgap funding measures, known as continuing resolutions. He portrayed the temporary funding bill as setting the ground for a spending "fight" with the Senate next year.

The spending bill does not include the White House's nearly $106 billion request for wartime aid for Israel and Ukraine. Nor does it provide humanitarian funding for Palestinians and other supplemental requests, including money for border security. Lawmakers are likely to turn their attention more fully to that request after the Thanksgiving holiday in hopes of negotiating a deal.

Tempers flare, bills languish as Johnson faces usual DC glitches

WASHINGTON (AP)—By most accounts, Speaker Mike Johnson inherited a House Republican majority in disarray after the sudden ouster of his predecessor last month.

But as Johnson, R-La., tries to rebuild that slim majority, he's fast running into the same hard-right factions and divisions that Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., was unable to tame. That's disrupting the party's agenda, shelving priorities and leaving gnawing questions about any leader's ability to govern.

Capitol Hill devolved into fresh scenes of political chaos this past week as tensions soared. A Republican senator challenged a Teamsters union boss to a brawl, one of several outbursts involving lawmakers, and the untested new speaker was forced to abandon his own party's schedule and send everyone home early for Thanksgiving.

"This place is a pressure cooker," Johnson lamented. Hopefully, he said, people will "cool off."

But the outlook ahead appears no better. House Republicans who pledged to slash federal spending, investigate President Joe Biden and end a long string of Democratic policies have made only incremental progress on their priorities.

Even though McCarthy struck a surprising debt deal with Biden earlier this year that set a course to reduce federal deficits by $1.5 trillion over the next decade, a conservative victory, it exists mainly on paper.

Republicans have failed to pass all the legislation needed to put all those cuts into law and have yanked some bills from the House floor. Centrist conservatives said the measures went too far, however, as the hard-right faction demands steeper reductions in government programs.

With the days dwindling before a potential government shutdown, Congress had little choice but to pass another short-term measure that keeps federal spending on autopilot for a couple more months. That avoids a federal closure for now, but sets up the next showdown in January.

"We haven't done anything!" thundered Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, lashing into his colleagues in a lengthy speech as lawmakers fled for the exits.

Conservatives took particular umbrage at the temporary spending bill, called a continuing resolution, that maintained spending at the levels that had been agreed to last year, when Democrats had full control of Congress and Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., was the speaker.

"When are we going to do what we said we were going to do?" Roy railed. "When are we going to act like a Republican majority and start fighting?"

It's the same complaint that led the hard-right bloc to oust McCarthy in October, the first unseating of a speaker in U.S. history, and will threaten Johnson's leadership.

The GOP divide on spending underscores the disconnect between Republican ideals for shrinking the size and scope of government and the reality of cutting programs and services close to home.

Rep. Nick LaLota, R-N.Y., was one of the more centrist conservatives who voted against a procedural step on legislation to fund the Justice Department, among other agencies, because he said the law enforcement cuts would hurt public safety agencies.

"My constituents don't want me voting for that," he said.

Republicans are also incensed they have been enduring countless midnight voting sessions, considering hundreds of amendments — voting to slash Biden administration salaries to $1, trying to end "woke" policies on diversity and inclusion — on legislative packages that ultimately go nowhere.

LaLota said after 10 months in the majority, the strategy is not working. "My constituents want us to cut, but they want us to cut in the right areas," he said.

Complicating the work of Congress is a world at war.

The flu soaring in 7 US states, rising in others, health officials say

NEW YORK (AP)—The U.S. flu season is underway, with at least seven states reporting high levels of illnesses and cases rising in other parts of the country, health officials say.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted new flu data on Friday, showing very high activity last week in Louisiana, and high activity in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, New Mexico and South Carolina. It was also high in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, the U.S. territory where health officials declared an influenza epidemic earlier this month.

"We're off to the races," said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University infectious diseases expert

Traditionally, the winter flu season ramps up in December or January. But it took off in October last year, and is making a November entrance this year.

Flu activity was moderate but rising in New York City, Arkansas, California, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. And while flu activity has been high in Alaska for weeks, the state did not report data last week, so it wasn't part of the latest count.

Tracking during flu season relies in part on reports of people with flu-like symptoms who go to doctor's offices or hospitals; many people with the flu are not tested, so their infections aren't lab-confirmed. COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses can sometimes muddy the picture.

Alicia Budd, who leads the CDC's flu surveillance team, said several indicators are showing "continued increases" in flu.

There are different kinds of flu viruses, and the version that's been spreading the most so far this year usually leads to a lesser amount of hospitalizations and deaths in the elderly—the group on whom flu tends to take the largest toll.

So far this fall, the CDC estimates at least 780,000 flu illnesses, at least 8,000 hospitalizations and at least 490 flu-related deaths—including at least one child.

Budd said that it's not yet clear exactly how effective the current flu vaccines are, but the shots are well-matched to the flu strains that are showing up. In the U.S., about 35% of U.S. adults and 33% of children have been vaccinated against flu, current CDC data indicates. That's down compared to last year in both categories.

Flu vaccination rates are better than rates for the other two main respiratory viruses—COVID-19 and RSV. About 14% of adults and 5% of children have gotten the currently recommended COVID-19 shot, and about 13.5% of adults 60 and older have gotten one of the RSV shots that became available earlier this year.

Asia

TO CREATE ESCAPE PIPE FOR TRAPPED WORKERS

New drill bores deeper into India tunnel

LUCKNOW, India (AP)—Rescuers drilled deeper into the rubble of a collapsed road tunnel in northern India on Friday to fix wide pipes for 40 workers trapped underground for a sixth day to crawl to their freedom.

Drilling with a new machine started on Thursday and has covered a stretch of 24 meters (78 feet) so far, Devendra Patwal, a disaster management official, said.

It may require up to 60 meters (195 feet) to enable the trapped workers' escape, Patwal told The Associated Press on Friday.

However, the drilling was interrupted on Friday afternoon when damage was caused to some machine bearings by the breaking of rocks and clearing the debris, said Anshu Manish Khalko, director of the National Highway Authority.

The machine is being repaired and anchored, he added.

Khalko said another heavy-duty drilling machine is being brought to the tunnel to continue the drilling uninterrupted. It is expected to reach the site on Saturday.

Earlier, the rescuers had hoped to complete the drilling by Friday night and create an escape tunnel of pipes welded together.

Some of the workers felt fever and body aches Wednesday, but there has been no deterioration in their condition, he said. Nuts, roasted chickpeas, popcorn and medicine are being sent to them via a pipe every two hours.

The construction workers have been trapped since Sunday when a landslide caused a portion of the 4.5-kilometer (2.7-mile) tunnel they were building to collapse about 200 meters (500 feet) from the entrance. The hilly area is prone to landslide and subsidence.

The site is in Uttarakhand, a mountainous state dotted with Hindu temples that attract many pilgrims and tourists. Highway and building construction has been constant to accommodate the influx.

The tunnel is part of the busy Chardham all-weather road, a flagship federal project connecting various Hindu pilgrimage sites.

About 200 disaster relief personnel have been at the site using drilling equipment and excavators in the rescue operation, with the plan to push 80-centimeter-wide (2.6-foot-wide) steel pipes through an opening of excavated debris.

A machine used earlier in the week was slow in pushing the pipes through the debris, a state government statement said.

The new American Auger machine has a drilling capacity of up to 5 meters (16 feet) per hour and is equipped with a 990-millimeter (2.9 foot) diameter pipe to clear debris. At times, it is slowed down by the pile of rubble.

State officials have contacted Thai experts who helped rescue a youth soccer team trapped in a cave in Thailand in 2018, state government administrator Gaurav Singh said. They also have approached the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute for possible help.

Japan, China agree to work on stable relationship

TOKYO (AP)—Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed Friday to build a stable and constructive relationship, but achieved only a vague agreement on easing a dispute over a Chinese ban on Japanese seafood, officials said.

Kishida told reporters after a 65-minute meeting with Xi on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco that they agreed to "find ways to resolve the dispute through meetings and dialogue in a constructive manner."

He said they would convene a meeting of scientific experts but gave no details, and told reporters later Tuesday that timing of a possible lifting of the ban was "unforseeable."

Kishida had demanded that China immediately lift its ban on Japanese seafood, in place since the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant began discharging treated radioactive wastewater into the sea on Aug. 24. The ban has badly hurt Japanese exporters of scallops and other seafood.

Japan says the wastewater is much safer than international standards and that the International Atomic Energy Agency has concluded the environmental and health impact of its release is negligible. China calls the discharge "nuclear-contaminated water."

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV alsosaid China and Japan agreed to find a way to resolve the Fukushima water issue through consultations and negotiations. Xi, calling the discharge a global health and marine environment issue, told Kishida that Japan should take domestic and international concerns seriously and handle them in a responsible and constructive manner, CCTV said in an online report.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, speaking Friday in Beijing, said all countries have the right to ensure food safety and protect public health.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno praised the talks as "extremely meaningful" because Kishida and Xi "confirmed their mutual goal of building constructive and stable Japan-China relations from a wide perspective."

But a series of disputes dominated the talks. Kishida asked Xi to remove all marking buoys that Beijing has placed inside Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone in the East China Sea, and to quickly release a Japanese businessman who was formally arrested in October on spying allegations.

Kishida said he raised "grave concern" about China's increased military activity around Japan, including joint exercises with Russia. He stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, where China regularly dispatches military ships and planes to threaten Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory.

Kishida also held talks on the sidelines of APEC with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol. They also attended a roundtable with technology startups and joined an event at Stanford University to discuss possible cooperation in investment and development in semiconductor, quantum, AI and other technologies—another move underscoring deepening ties between the two countries.

Kishida said he has high expectations for a three-way cooperation with the United States and South Korea in the area. He said that a nation cannot achieve resilience of innovation and supply chain on its own and that he could imagine "a future of our cooperation" among the three countries.

Yoon said at the Stanford event that innovation is borderless and that South Korea supports promising startups "regardless of their nationalities or where their startups are based."

"As the competitiveness of startups in both South Korea and Japan is excellent, we can create great synergies by expanding cooperation between the countries," Yoon said, pledging that the two countries will together support the innovations by younger generations.

World

Patients, staff leave Gaza hospital

AP

Palestinian rescuers evacuate an injured woman that was found under the rubble of a destroyed house following an Israeli airstrike in Khan Younis refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP)—Hundreds of patients, medical staff and people displaced by Israel's war against Hamas left Gaza's largest hospital Saturday, with one evacuee describing a panicked and chaotic scene as Israeli forces searched and face-scanned men among those leaving and took some away.

» Dozens killed at crowded refugee camp

Israel's military has been searching Gaza City's Shifa Hospital for a Hamas command center that it alleges is located under the facility—a claim Hamas and hospital staff deny. The evacuation, which Israel says was voluntary, left behind only Israeli troops and a small number of health workers to care for those too sick to move.

"We left at gunpoint," Mahmoud Abu Auf told The Associated Press by phone after he and his family left the crowded hospital. "Tanks and snipers were everywhere inside and outside." He said he saw Israeli troops detain three men.

Elsewhere in northern Gaza, dozens of people were killed in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp when what witnesses described as an Israeli airstrike hit a crowded U.N. shelter in the main combat zone. It caused massive destruction in the camp's Fakhoura school, said wounded survivors Ahmed Radwan and Yassin Sharif.

"The scenes were horrifying. Corpses of women and children were on the ground. Others were screaming for help," Radwan said by phone. AP photos from a local hospital showed more than 20 bodies wrapped in bloodstained sheets.

The Israeli military, which had warned Jabaliya residents and others in a social media post in Arabic to leave, said only that its troops were active in the area "with the aim of hitting terrorists." It rarely comments on individual strikes, saying only that it targets Hamas while trying to minimize civilian harm.

"Receiving horrifying images & footage of scores of people killed and injured in another UNRWA school sheltering thousands of displaced," Philippe Lazzarini, the commissioner general of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA, said on X, formerly Twitter.

World's attention on Gaza, Ukrainians worry war fatigue will hurt their cause

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—When Tymofii Postoiuk and his friends set up an online fundraising effort for Ukraine, donations poured in from around the globe, helping to purchase essential equipment for Ukrainian armed forces.

As the fighting with Russia wore on and war fatigue set in, the donations slowed down, but money continued to come in steadily. Then the Israel-Hamas war broke out on Oct. 7.

With the start of another major conflict, social media networks including X, formerly known as Twitter, were flooded with news from the Middle East. "Our fundraising posts and updates simply get lost in between those tweets," Postoiuk said.

The result has been a broad shift in the world's attention away from Ukraine to the fighting in Gaza—a trend that worries many Ukrainians. They fear that a combination of global fatigue, competing political agendas and limited resources will result in less aid for their military, hurting the country's ability to sustain its confrontation with Russia.

"The longer we talk about our war, the less interest it holds for people," said 21-year-old Ivan Mahuriak, who lives in Lviv in western Ukraine. Like many other Ukrainians, he feels as if the world stopped paying attention to the war in Ukraine even before the Hamas attack on Israel.

The fatigue, he said, arises from the fact that dynamics on the ground are significantly less than in 2022, when Ukrainian armed forces managed to completely or partially push Russians out of several regions.

"In some places, the front line is still. But that doesn't mean that nothing is happening," he said. His brother, two cousins, several colleagues and friends are in the Ukrainian military and continue to fight Russian troops.

Health & Wellness

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

How to support someone with post-traumatic stress disorder

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: I'm reaching out because I'm in a tough spot. A close friend rode out Hurricane Ian in Florida last year and it seems to me that he's struggling now. He's angry and jumpy, while being numb to what's happening around him. He told me that he's not sleeping well, especially when another hurricane is in the news. Is it possible that he has PTSD from the hurricane? I'm not sure how to offer support without making him feel uncomfortable.

ANSWER: Post-traumatic stress disorder, also called PTSD, doesn't just happen to characters on the screen. It's a normal, natural response to trauma and happens when the nervous system, which is designed to protect you from danger, gets stuck in the fight-or-flight response.

People may develop PTSD when they experience, see or learn about a shocking experience or event involving harm, threatened death or serious injury. Natural disasters, like experiencing the power and devastation of Hurricane Ian, can trigger PTSD.

In addition to natural disasters, other common events that cause PTSD symptoms include accidents, being threatened with a weapon, combat exposure, abuse or receiving a life-threatening medical diagnosis.

PTSD symptoms

Some people experience distressing symptoms for a short period after a traumatic event but get better with time and self-care. For others, the symptoms worsen over time and begin to interfere with daily activities and relationships.

Overall, PTSD symptoms usually are grouped into four categories:

■ Intrusive thoughts: Recurrent and unwanted memories of the traumatic event can cause significant emotional distress or physical reactions. The person may experience nightmares or flashbacks, which is reliving the traumatic event again.

■ Avoidance: People with PTSD may avoid talking about the event or steer clear of places, activities or people that remind them of the event.

■ Mood and thought disturbances: This category of PTSD symptoms can mirror depression, with people experiencing hopelessness, negative thoughts about themselves or others, detachment from loved ones, lack of interest in activities, emotional numbness and relationship difficulties.

■ Reactivity: These symptoms may include being easily startled, always on guard for danger and overwhelming feelings of guilt or shame. The person may be irritable or have angry outbursts. They could have trouble sleeping or concentrating and engage in self-destructive behaviors such as drinking too much or taking illicit drugs.

It's important to note that some people may have a few PTSD symptoms but not enough for an official diagnosis of the condition. In these cases, treatment still can be helpful and can guide people toward self-care strategies and coping mechanisms.

PTSD treatment

The good news for you and your friend is that PTSD is treatable, and many people manage it well or recover from their symptoms. Some protective factors are especially helpful during recovery, including having positive social support from friends like you.

PTSD treatment involves addressing both the physical and mental aspects of the condition. Treatment plans developed by a healthcare professional are tailored to meet the needs of each person.

Certain treatments calm the nervous system and help people regain control over their physical responses to triggers. These tactics help the person have an automatic physical response to tell their body that a perceived threat isn't accurate. Examples include grounding techniques, breath awareness and body-focused interventions. For example, short and shallow breaths can be signs of the nervous system reacting to a trigger. Through treatment, people can identify this reaction and learn to take slow breaths, which can calm the physical reactions.

Cognitive processing therapy can help your friend identify and challenge negative thoughts and beliefs related to the hurricane. Other treatments, such as exposure therapy and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing can help as well. Finally, medications may be helpful when used in combination with other treatment options.

Positive support

I encourage you to discuss your concerns with your friend. Focus on your observations of his behaviors before and after the hurricane. Listen without judgment and don't minimize his feelings. Suggest that he seek professional help to undergo a thorough exam and have his symptoms evaluated.

Finally, I recommend that you learn more about PTSD to get a grasp of what he is going through and why he may react the way he does. Remember that each person's reaction to a traumatic event is valid, and his trauma shouldn't be compared to another's as "better" or "worse."

PTSD isn't a sign of weakness. It's a normal response to traumatic events, like a hurricane in your community. With a combination of interventions and professional help, your friend can learn to manage his symptoms and regain control.—*Jackie Richter, Psychiatry & Psychology, Mayo Clinic Health System, La Crosse, Wisconsin*

Steps to take to improve fertility

By SHARON THEIMER
Mayo Clinic News Network

Conditioning for pregnancy has some things in common with preparing to run a race. Diet, exercise and avoiding unhealthy habits are all important to increase the chances of becoming pregnant, says May Al-Araji, MBChB, a family medicine expert at Mayo Clinic Healthcare in London.

"In general, we look at lifestyle to start off with," Dr. Al-Araji says. "Are exercise and diet healthy and balanced? Are there any factors that might reduce the ability to conceive, such as smoking and alcohol consumption?"

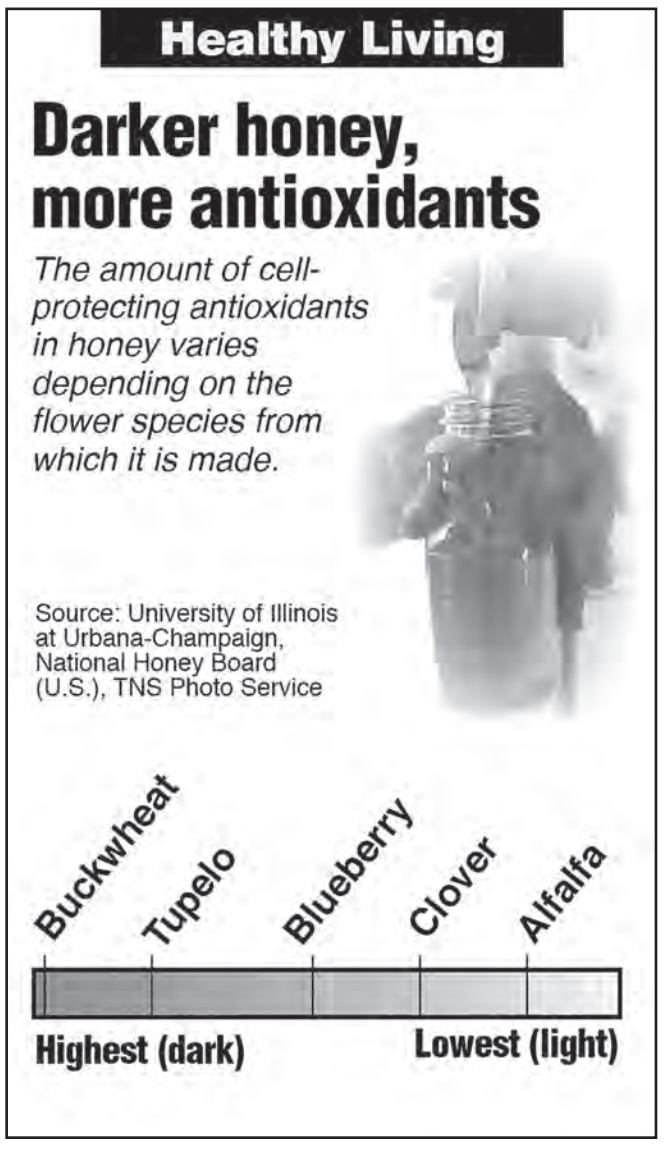
Overly strenuous exercise or being underweight or overweight can decrease fertility. When it comes to diet, eating healthy, varied foods in the right amounts to achieve nutrition and a healthy weight is best.

"Look at the portion size. I think that is the most important," Dr. Al-Araji says. "In general, try to avoid processed food and rich, fatty food, and incorporate pulses, greens, vegetables and fruit."

If health concerns such as coeliac disease mean limiting or avoiding certain foods, that should be taken into account in dietary planning, she adds.

Reducing stress levels, getting enough sleep and avoiding excessive caffeine are also important to fertility, Dr. Al-Araji adds.

A healthy lifestyle is important for women and men alike when planning a family, Dr. Al-Araji says: "The advice is very similar: Look after your health."


Healthy Living
Darker honey, more antioxidants
The amount of cell-protecting antioxidants in honey varies depending on the flower species from which it is made.
Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, National Honey Board (U.S.), TNS Photo Service
Buckwheat
Tupelo
Blueberry
Clover
Alfalfa
Highest (dark)
Lowest (light)

Essential tips to ensure safe sleep for infants

By DEEDEE STIEPAN
Mayo Clinic News Network

The risk for sudden infant death syndrome, or SIDS, is highest in the first year of life. SIDS often happens during sleep, which is why knowing and practicing safe sleep is so important.

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Angela Mattke, a pediatrician with Mayo Clinic's Children's Center, discusses the most current safe sleep recommendations.

Sleep can be a big challenge for parents with infants.

"I think as parents, we're all desperate to get our children to sleep at night," says Dr. Mattke, who warns parents to be aware of products that are not safe for sleep.

"There's lots of different products that are marketed towards families and parents to help guarantee to improve their sleep. But most of those products have been shown to not be safe for infants to be sleeping in specifically anything that has an incline," says Dr. Mattke.

Other products, like loungers and weighted blankets, also are not safe for sleep.

Dr. Mattke says, when it comes to baby's sleeping space, keep it simple.

"Make sure the infant is sleeping on their back with no fluffy stuff around them. They should be the cutest thing in their bassinet in their crib," she says.

DREAMSTIME

Sleep can be a big challenge for parents with infants.

Sharing a bedroom with baby, especially for the first six months of life, can decrease the risk of sleep-related death by up to 50%. But the key is sharing a bedroom, not a bed.

"We want them sleeping in their own flat, safe sleeping environment with no fluffy blankets or things that could get in the way and risk their breathing," says Dr. Mattke.

American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations on creating a safe sleep environment include:

■ Place infants on their backs for sleep in their own sleep space with no other people.

■ Use a crib, bassinet or portable play yard with a firm, flat mattress and a fitted sheet. Avoid sleep on a couch, armchair or in a seating device, like a swing or car safety seat (except while riding in the car).

■ Keep loose blankets, pillows, stuffed toys, bumpers and other soft items out of the sleep space.

■ Breastfeed if possible and avoid smoking.

■ Other recommendations include:

■ Offer a pacifier at naptime and bedtime.

■ Do not use home monitors or commercial devices, including wedges or positioners, marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS.

■ Infants should receive all recommended vaccinations.

■ Supervised, awake tummy time is recommended daily to facilitate development.

Life & Style

Swift postpones Rio show after heat kills fan during concert

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)—Taylor Swift postponed an Eras Tour concert in Rio de Janeiro Saturday after a 23-year-old fan died during her Friday night show, according to a message posted on the singer's Instagram.

"I'm writing this from my dressing room in the stadium. The decision has been made to postpone tonight's show due to the extreme temperatures in Rio," the singer said in a handwritten note on Instagram. "The safety and well being of my fans, fellow performers, and crew has to and always will come first."

The cause of death for Ana Clara Benevides Machado, the young woman who sought medical attention at Nilton Santos Olympic Stadium during Friday's show, has not yet been announced. The office of Rio's public prosecutor opened a criminal investigation and said Benevides' body was being examined.

Benevides' death shook many people in Brazil. She had taken her first flight ever to travel from the country's center-west region to Rio to see her favorite musician. She also created a WhatsApp group to keep her family updated, sending photos and videos every step of the way, family members told online news site G1.

Fans and politicians reacted to her death with outrage, speculating it was linked to extreme heat.

Concertgoers complained they were not allowed to take water into the stadium despite the stifling weather. As temperatures continued to rise Saturday and with two more shows to go at the time, federal authorities announced that free water would now be made available at concerts and other large events.

AP

Taylor Swift fans wait for the doors of Nilton Santos Olympic stadium to open for her Eras Tour concert amid a heat wave in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023.

One of Benevides' friends, who also went to the concert, told local outlets they had both been given water while waiting to enter the stadium.

In a previous statement shared on her social media Saturday morning, Swift said she had a "shattered heart."

"There's very little information I have other than the fact that she was so incredibly beautiful and far too young," the singer wrote of the young woman.

The show's organizer, Time4Fun, said on Instagram that paramedics attended to Benevides after she reported feeling unwell. She was taken to a first-aid center and then to a hospital, where she died an hour later, the statement from the Brazilian live entertainment company said.

Fans who attended the Friday show said they were not allowed to bring water bottles into the stadium even though Rio and most of Brazil have had record-breaking temperatures this week amid a dangerous and lasting heat wave. The daytime high in Rio on Friday was 39.1 degrees Celsius (102.4 degrees Fahrenheit), but it felt much hotter.

Apparent temperature—a combination of temperature and humidity—hit 59 C (138 F) Friday morning in Rio, the highest index ever recorded there.

Elizabeth Morin, 26, who recently moved to Rio from Los Angeles, described "sauna-like" conditions inside the stadium.

"It was extremely hot. My hair got so wet from sweat as soon as I came in," she said. "There was a point at which I had to check my breathing to make sure I wasn't going to pass out."

Morin said she drank plenty of water but saw "a good amount of people looking distressed" and others "yelling for water." She said she was able to get water from the sidelines of the area she was standing in, but that water was a lot harder to access from other parts of the stadium, "especially if you were concerned about losing your specific position."

During the show, Swift paused her performance and asked from the stage for water to be brought to a group of people who had successfully caught the singer's attention, according to Morin.

"They were holding up their phones saying 'We need water,'" she recalled.

Snoop Dogg says he's giving up 'smoke.' That caught some of his fans off guard

NEW YORK (AP)—Asking for privacy, hip-hop legend and longtime marijuana enthusiast Snoop Dogg says he's going to stop smoking—though he didn't specify exactly what that might mean.

"After much consideration and conversation with my family, I've decided to give up smoke," Snoop wrote in a message shared on Instagram and X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, on Thursday. "Please respect my privacy at this time."

The rapper and entrepreneur, who has become known for his own weed-related ventures over the years, provided no additional details in his brief announcement, which came the week after a new marijuana-adjacent product was introduced bearing his name. Representatives for the 52-year-old Snoop, born Calvin Cordozar Broadus Jr., did not immediately respond to The Associated Press' requests for comment Friday.

That didn't stop ample speculation from fans, many of whom filled the comments of Snoop's post after being caught off guard by his decision.

Some wondered if Snoop would switch to another form of THC or announce a new business-related or marketing venture down the road. Others applauded the announcement and suggested Snoop may have chosen to stop smoking for his own personal health.

Marketing and branding experts note that it's not uncommon to see this kind of response when celebrities make unexpected announcements—especially if it contradicts something fans have identified them with for such a long time.

Honor a somber event by doing a good deed

DEAR ABBY: I was blessed to work for President John F. Kennedy at the White House. I'm committed to honoring his memory on the 60th anniversary of his death on Nov. 22, 1963, in gratitude for the life of such an inspiring leader who promoted world peace.

On Nov. 22, 2023, we are asking people in America and throughout the world to take the initiative and make a promise to do a good deed, as a group or an individual, and to make a positive difference, spreading love, hope and peace by:

- Supporting the poor.
- Caring for the sick.
- Feeding the homeless.
- Assisting the disabled.
- Protecting refugees.
- Planting a tree (to help curb climate change).
- Improving the general welfare of children.
- Promoting the common good.
- Praying for peace.

Thank you, Abby, for spreading this message.

CARMELLA LaSPADA, FOUNDER, NO GREATER LOVE INC.

DEAR CARMELLA: Thank you for helping me make my readers aware of such a positive endeavor. Readers, a generous act is like a pebble in a pond. Its ripples spread endlessly outward.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: Several of our grandchildren have had weddings in the last few years, along with showers and receptions. They all had plans to move into residences of their own. The shower gifts were household items—nothing extravagant, but nice.

Our granddaughter is now planning to be married in the next few months, and she wants all the things the previous grandkids wanted. Her parents will only go so far.

This granddaughter and her fiance have agreed to live with the groom's recently widowed mother, who has a fully furnished home and a spare bedroom. The newlyweds may have a bedroom to decorate, but the rest of the house belongs to someone else. Packing up gifts for storage will require a place to put them, because other family members don't have spare room.

How do we have a normal shower for a couple who won't have room for their gifts? Renting a unit can get expensive. By the way, the bride does have a job and income, but the groom is currently unemployed.

WON'T FIT IN KENTUCKY

DEAR WON'T FIT: Forgive me if this seems judgmental, but more practical than figuring out where this young couple is going to store the loot would be for them to concentrate on his finding a job. It would also be a good idea for them to have premarital counseling before she moves in with his mother to be sure they are on the same page regarding money, children, problem-solving and a myriad of other things that can ruin a marriage.

For this shower, consider showering the couple with good wishes and gifts of cash for them to invest until they are ready to use it.

■■■

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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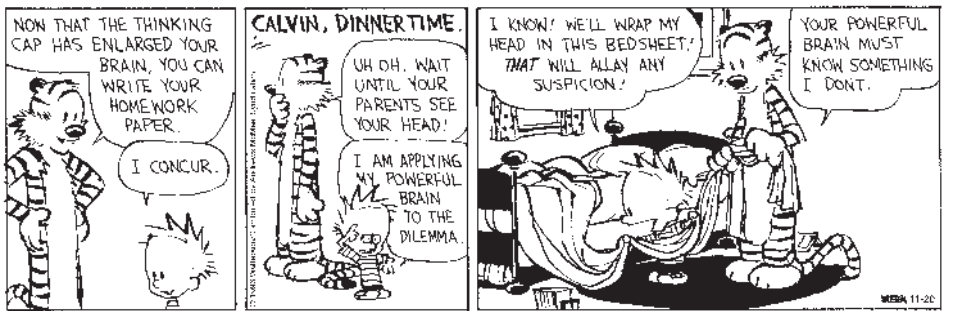
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


NOW THAT THE THINKING CAP HAS ENLARGED YOUR BRAIN, YOU CAN WRITE YOUR HOMEWORK PAPER.
I CONCUR.
CALVIN, DINNERTIME.
UH OH. WAIT UNTIL YOUR PARENTS SEE YOUR HEAD!
I AM APPLYING MY POWERFUL BRAIN TO THE DILEMMA.
I KNOW! WE'LL WRAP MY HEAD IN THIS BEDSHEET. THAT WILL ALLAY ANY SUSPICION.
YOUR POWERFUL BRAIN MUST KNOW SOMETHING I DON'T.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WHAT CAN I GET YOU, ETHEL?
IT'S BAD ENOUGH YOU ANNOY ME IN THE BOOTHS ALL THE TIME.
NOW I HAVE TO LOOK AT THAT MUG EVERY TIME I ORDER??
CUP OF WARM SPIT FOR ETHEL!
IT'S CALLED ADAM@HOME! AT HOME!!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

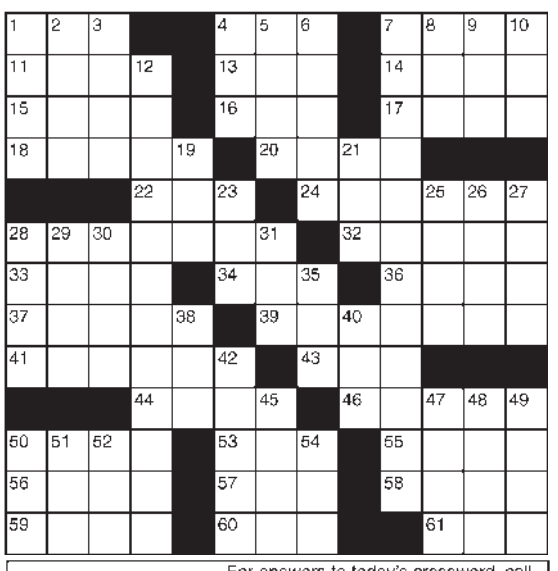
ACROSS
1 Vintage
4 "Kapow!"
7 Party cheese
11 "Stay" singer Lisa
13 Tempe sch.
14 "Do — others ..."
15 Beige
16 "— Way" (Sinatra biography)
17 Body pics
18 Annual visitor
20 Edict
22 Attempt
24 Nativity display
28 Patella
32 Court proceeding
33 Frost
34 Frenzied
36 "Memory" musical
37 Nervous
39 Last car
41 Daytona 500 acronym
43 Cattle call?
44 Piece of work
46 Curly-tailed dog
50 Leave at the altar
53 Mountain pass
55 One-named supermodel
56 Novelist Waugh
57 Bikini half
58 Deserve
59 Netting
60 Feminine side
61 Goat's cry

DOWN
1 Spanish cheers
2 "Livin' La Vida —"
3 Bruce of "Nebraska"
4 "Humbug!"
5 "Dream on!"
6 Haydn's output
7 Bakery treat
8 Genetic letters
9 Addams cousin
10 Dawn goddess
12 Sauce on an ice cream sundae
19 Lob's path
21 Skill
23 Thanksgiving veggie
25 "Arrivederci!"
26 Millinery
27 Differently
28 Genghis —
29 Singer Hendryx
30 Vittles
31 Lobbying org.
35 River blocker
38 Shrill bark
40 Large snake
42 Sport played at Eton
45 Rani's dress
47 Mosque leader
48 Skater Lipinski
49 "Blessings" author Quindlen
50 Bread spread
51 — -de-France
52 French article
54 Zero-star review

Solution time: 21 mins.

C	A	P	P	A	■	■	A	C	I	■	G	O	D
P	L	E	A	D	■	■	N	A	W	■	O	H	C
A	P	R	I	L	■	G	I	O	S	S	A	I	■
■	■	U	N	I	C	E	F	■	■	P	E	R	C
D	R	S	■	B	F	I	■	■	B	R	F	F	D
I	C	A	N	■	■	D	A	L	A	I	■	■	■
P	A	L	A	C	E	■	■	L	A	T	S	A	T
■	■	■	S	A	S	H	A	■	■	E	P	P	S
S	I	S	S	Y	■	A	R	M	■	■	O	O	P
A	R	I	A	■	J	U	N	F	A	U	■	■	■
R	E	F	U	S	A	L	■	■	A	S	S	E	S
A	N	T	■	■	O	C	E	■	■	L	E	A	K	S
H	E	S	■	■	W	E	D	■	■	S	A	L	E	S

Last Friday's Answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ashley Fink, 37; Dan Byrd, 38; Joel McHale, 52; Bo Derek, 67.

Happy Birthday: Rely on your intuition when it's necessary to act. Size up situations using common sense and emotions. Choose diplomacy to ensure you don't burn bridges or regret something you share. Look for opportunities that help you make positive lifestyle changes. Distance yourself from people who cause trouble. It's essential to put your energy into something that enables you to be the person you want to be. Your numbers are 4, 11, 15, 23, 27, 34, 46.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Do your best to keep up with technology and advancements at work or in your industry of choice. Take the initiative to stand out by using your skills uniquely and trying to finish what you start in record time. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Don't hesitate to go after what you want. It's up to you to open doors if you want to move forward. An opportunity is a phone call away; reunite with someone who has similar goals. A joint venture looks promising. An invitation will be informative. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Self-improvement projects will boost your morale and push you to get involved in events or pastimes that bring you joy and encourage you to expand your interests and revisit friendships. Update your skills, knowledge and resume. Embrace new beginnings. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Discipline, experience and surrounding yourself with knowledgeable people will help you find your happy place. Get involved in a group effort that offers gratification for what you have to offer, and gain from the connections you make. A creative attitude will lead to financial gain. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Be careful who you trust. Listen and observe. Concentrate on gathering information that will help you reach your goal. Refuse to let someone rope you into something that benefits them, not you. Pay more attention to how you present yourself by updating your image and skills. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Take control and refuse to let anyone use emotional tactics to slow you down. Put your energy into completing anything stopping you from pursuing your dreams. The fastest way to positive change is to take care of unfinished business. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Tell it like it is. Share your thoughts, wants and needs. Look for unique and intriguing ways to grab someone's attention, and it will encourage positive change. Be good to yourself and surround yourself with people who treat you right. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Take time to direct your energy efficiently. Refuse to let the changes others make cause you to react impulsively. Choose a creative or unique outlet that will lift your spirit and encourage you to make life-altering changes at home geared toward your comfort. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Don't reveal secrets. Choose words that reflect neutrality, kindness and innocence. It's up to you to set the scenario and control the situation. Keep an open mind and listen, but do what's best for you. Choose the truth and ward off an argument. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Keep life simple and prioritize consistency. Arguing will not get you ahead or make you feel good, but a creative, innovative idea will encourage growth and positive change. Put your energy where it counts and live in the moment. Kindness carries weight. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Let others do as they please while you follow the most suitable or sustainable path. Take care of your needs instead of trying to please everyone else. Use your intelligence, insight, and fortitude to protect and nurture your body, mind and soul. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't stop midway. Finish what you start and promote what you have to offer. The sky is the limit if you follow your heart instead of giving in to pressure and outside influences. Stay in touch with your heart and make your needs a priority. ✪✪✪

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

3	7	5			1		6	
1	2		8		3	7		5
4		8			9		2	
5								6
8	1	7	6	9		2		
	3	4		8		5		
7					6	9		
	4	1	3				5	8
2				1				3

Difficulty: ★ 11/20

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

7	4	1	8	6	2	5	3	9
5	6	8	3	7	9	1	4	2
9	2	3	1	5	4	8	6	7
3	1	9	5	2	8	4	7	6
4	7	6	9	1	3	2	8	5
8	5	2	7	4	6	3	9	1
1	8	7	6	3	5	9	2	4
2	9	5	4	8	7	6	1	3
6	3	4	2	9	1	7	5	8

Difficulty: ★★★★ 11/18

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

MARY, MARIE, MARIA Solution: 14 letters

P	A	L	O	T	E	T	T	E	N	I	O	T	N	A
I	E	T	A	L	U	C	A	M	M	I	Y	M	S	V
C	D	W	Ⓔ	L	L	S	O	S	O	L	O	E	N	G
K	W	I	Ⓝ	M	E	B	G	R	E	O	R	N	I	E
F	A	N	Ⓐ	T	L	N	E	R	R	E	Y	O	P	R
O	R	S	Ⓙ	E	I	H	S	E	H	B	D	U	P	O
R	D	T	Y	N	T	H	S	T	G	I	D	N	O	P
D	S	E	N	O	C	H	L	I	R	N	E	O	P	O
Y	R	A	M	O	R	A	D	O	G	E	B	S	L	U
E	E	D	S	I	M	U	S	A	S	L	E	S	E	L
L	V	T	V	B	A	B	R	B	I	E	E	P	N	O
L	A	E	E	S	O	O	O	G	U	N	M	T	N	S
E	R	R	S	R	S	F	E	I	H	C	L	L	A	T
H	T	U	N	E	E	U	Q	I	T	T	E	R	O	G
S	T	E	E	N	B	U	R	G	E	N	F	R	A	H

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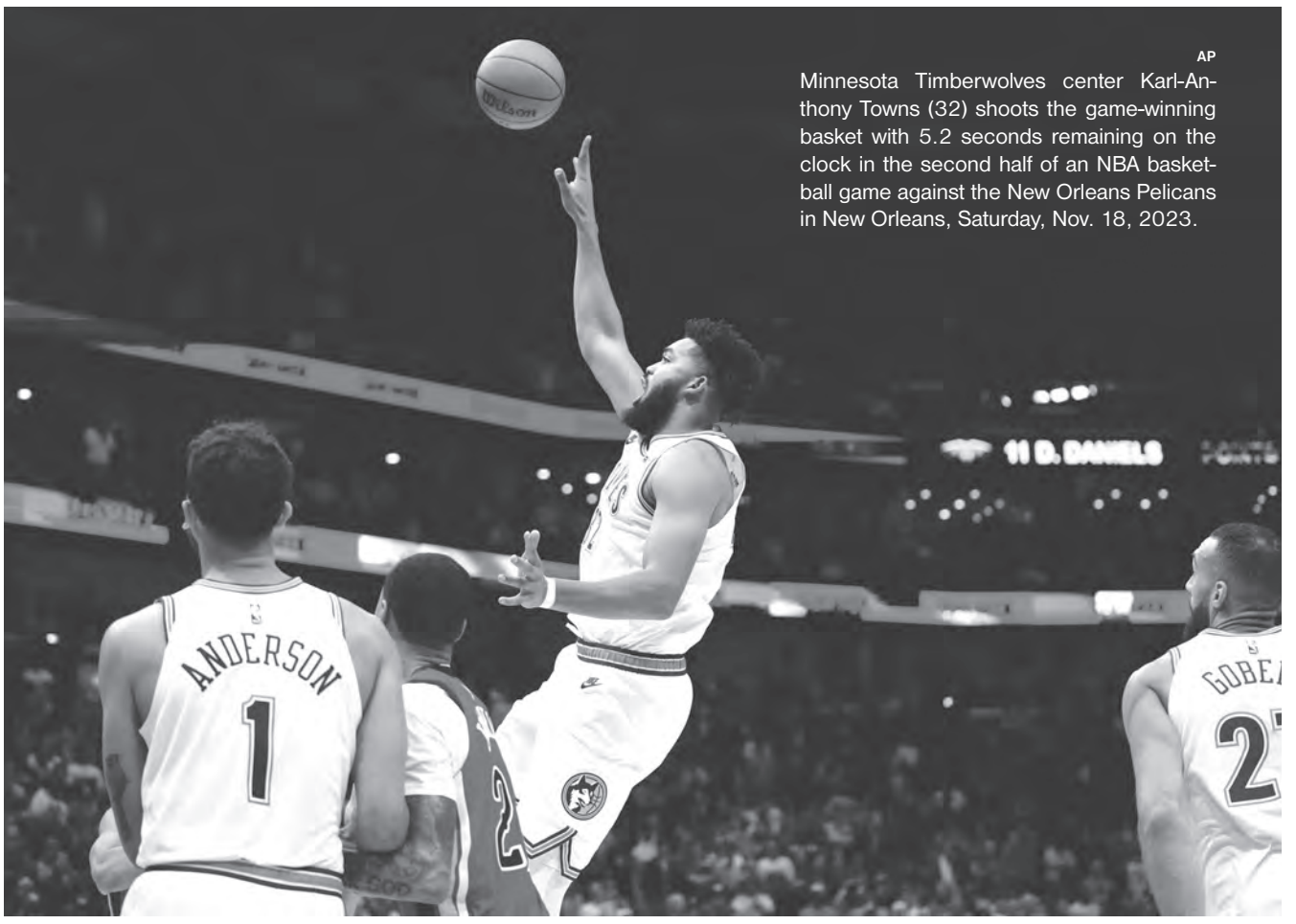
Anne, Anning, Antoinette, Avgeropoulos, Blige, Costa, Digby, Eddy, Edwards, Goretti, Harf, Holmes, Immaculate, Jane, Lambert, Menounos, Mobley, Moore, Mother, Olsen, Osborne, Palot, Pickford, Poppins, Queen, Rose, Shelley, Shriver, Steenburgen, Streep, Tallchief, Theresa, Travers, Tussaud, Tyler, Wells, Winstead

Last Saturday's Answer: Mix

Last Friday's Answer: Bows

Purchase **WONDERWORD** books in time for the holidays!, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-8-2-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Towns' floater in final seconds sends T'wolves to win over Pelicans



AP

Minnesota Timberwolves center Karl-Anthony Towns (32) shoots the game-winning basket with 5.2 seconds remaining on the clock in the second half of an NBA basketball game against the New Orleans Pelicans in New Orleans, Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023.

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Karl-Anthony Towns broke from a sideline huddle knowing his next shot likely would decide whether the Minnesota Timberwolves escaped New Orleans with a comeback victory or lost their second straight.

High-scoring Minnesota guard Anthony Edwards had fouled out with 10 seconds left, the Pelicans led by a point, and Wolves coach Chris Finch drew up a play for his dynamic forward.

"You play the whole game to hopefully have an opportunity to be in that situation; I looked at it as the funest part of the night," Towns said. "This game's supposed to be fun and I had a lot of fun in that situation."

Towns capped a 29-point, nine-assist performance with a running floater off the glass with 5 seconds left, and Minnesota overcame a 14-point deficit in the final 7:32 to beat New Orleans 121-120 on Saturday night.

Edwards scored 23 points before fouling out while guarding Brandon Ingram along the perimeter. But Ingram missed one of his two free throws, allowing Towns to put Minnesota in front from close range.

The Pelicans still had a shot to win it as time ran out, but Ingram, who had a game-high-30 points, missed a mid-range jumper. That capped a difficult closing stretch for the New Orleans star, who made just one shot and turned the ball over twice in the fourth quarter.

"Our execution went away a little bit," Ingram said. "I don't think I did a good job of kind of settling us down, getting into plays and trying to get the right execution down the stretch."

New Orleans led 108-94 with 8:04 left after Matt Ryan's third 3 of the game, but momentum turned quickly when Towns drew Herb Jones' fifth foul. That started a 7-0 Minnesota run that included a breakaway layup and transition 3 by Pelican Nickeil Alexander-Walker.

"It was a tough game for us. We were behind the score the whole game," Minnesota center Rudy Gobert said, adding that "the poise that we showed the whole game" separates this season's edition of the Wolves from that of a year ago.

Added Towns, "We definitely showed heart, our mental fortitude and the toughness our team has to find a way to win even when things are not going right."

Towns did not miss any of his three field goals or five foul shots in the fourth quarter, when he scored 12, including a 3 that gave Minnesota its first lead of the second half at 119-117.

"Tonight I thought was one of the best games I've watched him play," Gobert said. "He's a very smart player, obviously, a very unique player. When he does that he's an incredible weapon for us."

KNICKS 122, HORNETS 108

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Jalen Brunson scored 32 points as New York extended its winning streak to three games with a victory over Charlotte.

Brunson scored 26 points in the opening half for the Knicks, who never trailed and built a 15-point lead by the intermission on the way to their sixth win in seven games.

Donte DiVincenzo added 25 points, Julius Randle scored 21 points, R.J. Barrett finished with 15 points and Mitchell Robinson had a game-high 14 rebounds for New York.

LaMelo Ball led all scorers with 34 points for Charlotte, which lost its fourth straight game. Rookie Brandon Miller had 29 points and Miles Bridges 19.

BUCKS 132, MAVERICKS 125

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 40 points and Damian Lillard added 27 for as Milwaukee beat Dallas and extended its winning streak to four games.

Antetokounmpo was averaging 41.3 points in his last three games before being held to 16 Friday night in Charlotte. Against the Mavericks, he connected on 18 of 26 shots, including a pair of 3-pointers, and grabbed 14 rebounds to go along with seven assists.

Kyrie Irving scored 39 while Luka Doncic added 35 for Dallas (9-4).

GRIZZLIES 120, SPURS 108

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 27 points as short-handed Memphis overcame a 19-point deficit and sent San Antonio to its eighth straight loss.

Memphis outscored San Antonio 33-14 in the final quarter.

San Antonio rookie Victor Wembanyama finished with 19 points and 13 rebounds, and Keldon Johnson scored 22 points.

Desmond Bane scored 26 points, and Santi Aldama had 17 for Memphis, which recorded its largest comeback of the season.

BULLS 102, HEAT 97

CHICAGO (AP)—DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points and Chicago snapped a three-game skid, rallying to beat Miami and halting the Heat's winning streak at seven games.

Alex Caruso scored 11 points and all five Chicago starters reached double figures. Nikola Vucevic added 15 points, Coby White scored 14 and Zach LaVine contributed 13.

Jimmy Butler scored 25 for the Heat, who didn't trail in the game until the final minute. But Butler missed a pair of 3-point attempts in the final seconds. Bam Adebayo had 24 points and 10 rebounds for his seventh double-double of the season. Duncan Robinson added 17.

THUNDER 130, WARRIORS 123, OT

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 40 points, six rebounds and six assists, and Oklahoma City sent Golden State to its sixth straight loss.

Thunder rookie Chet Holmgren scored a season-high 36 points and added 10 rebounds and five assists, and Jaylin Williams had 22 points and six rebounds

Andrew Wiggins scored a season-high 31 points and was 12 of 19 with five 3s, and Stephen Curry had 25 points in his return from a right knee strain as the Warriors fell to 1-6 on their home floor.

NBA BRIEFS

Phoenix Suns' All-Star guard Bradley Beal out at least 3 more weeks with back injury

PHOENIX (AP)—Phoenix Suns guard Bradley Beal will be out for at least the next three weeks as he continues to recover from a low back strain that has kept him out for the majority of the season. The three-time All-Star has played in just three games this season, averaging 17.3 points and 5.3 rebounds. He was expected to play on Wednesday night against the Timberwolves, but he was a late scratch with his back issues. The team said Friday that the new injury timeline was "determined following further evaluation and consultation." The Suns added he would be reevaluated after the three weeks. The Suns came into the season with high hopes, largely thanks to the star trio of Kevin Durant, Devin Booker and Beal, but the group hasn't played together through 11 games. Booker has also missed substantial time with various injuries, including a calf strain. Phoenix has a 5-6 record this season heading into Friday night's game against the Utah Jazz.

Paul George fined $35,000 by NBA for ref criticism. He said Clippers were "against the extra three"

NEW YORK (AP)—Paul George was fined $35,000 by the NBA on Thursday for saying the referees were "awful" and that the Clippers played against "the extra three" in their loss in Denver. George scored a season-high 35 points in the Nuggets' 111-108 victory in the In-Season Tournament on Tuesday, then took aim at the officiating. "I thought we played great. It's tough, the adversity of playing against the extra three," George said. "I thought they were awful but, the defending champs, we've got to play better. "So many times I got hit on layups, 3-pointers. It was constant. Jump shots, getting hit, smacked on the forearm. It was a poor job." The NBA said the amount of the fine was based in part on George's history of public criticism of the officiating.

Kerr says Draymond Green 'took it too far' and 5-game suspension was deserved

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Golden State Warriors coach Steve Kerr said Draymond Green was "wrong" and "took it too far" when he put Minnesota's Rudy Gobert in a headlock, agreeing that the five-game suspension handed down by the NBA was deserved.

"Draymond was wrong," Kerr said Thursday before the Warriors' game against the Oklahoma City Thunder. "He knows that. It's a bad look. The five games is deserved."

The NBA cited Green's " history of unsportsmanlike acts " in determining the length.

The altercation occurred before two minutes had elapsed in the first quarter on Tuesday, when Golden State's Klay Thompson and Minnesota's Jaden McDaniels got in a shoving match near midcourt following a Timberwolves possession. Gobert stepped in and grabbed hold of Thompson before Green rushed in and pulled Gobert away from behind with his arm around the center's neck in what the league called "an unsportsmanlike and dangerous manner."

Thompson's jersey was ripped during the scuffle, and he, Green and McDaniels were all ejected. Thompson and McDaniels were each assessed a technical foul, while Green was assessed a Flagrant Foul 2. It was Green's second ejection in three games.

"He definitely took it too far," Kerr said. "I didn't have a problem with him getting Rudy off of Klay because the rule of thumb is you don't put your hands on another player on the other team. ... But he's got to let go. He hung on for six, seven seconds, and it was a terrible visual for the league, for Draymond, for everybody."

Thompson, McDaniels and Gobert were also penalized for their involvement, each receiving a $25,000 fine from the league.

But Green will pay the biggest price, both in terms of games missed and money lost. The suspension will cost him $769,704 in forfeited salary.

The Golden State forward has a notably fiery style of play and does not shy away from picking up fouls, but he has also been known to escalate situations too far. Kerr said the team is working with Green to rein in his behavior.

"Draymond has to find a way to not cross the line," Kerr said. "I'm not talking about getting an ejection or getting a technical. I'm talking about a physical act of violence. I mean, that's inexcusable. We have to do everything we can to give him the help and the assistance that he needs to be able to draw that distinction between being an incredible competitor ... but he can't cross that line."

Ravens handle Bengals after Burrow exits in 2nd quarter with wrist injury

BALTIMORE (AP)—Lamar Jackson hurt an ankle and lost one of his top targets to a more severe injury.

At least Baltimore's star quarterback was able to keep playing. The Cincinnati Bengals weren't so lucky.

Jackson threw two touchdown passes in the second quarter—one of which came thanks to a fortuitous carom—and the Ravens beat Cincinnati 34-20 on Thursday night after the Bengals lost Joe Burrow to a wrist injury.

The AFC North-leading Ravens (8-3) completed a head-to-head sweep of Cincinnati (5-5) and moved to 2 1/2 games ahead of the last-place Bengals—but both teams came out of the game with significant health concerns.

Burrow left in the second quarter after throwing a touchdown pass and wasn't able to return. Baltimore tight end Mark Andrews is expected to miss the rest of the season after hurting an ankle.

"That's very tough because that's my boy," Jackson said. "That's like receiver one sometimes."

Ravens coach John Harbaugh announced after the game that Andrews' injury appears to be season-ending. Cincinnati coach Zac Taylor said Burrow's injury looked like a sprain, and it's not clear what his availability is going forward.

The injuries overshadowed this huge divisional matchup, but only to a degree. It was a huge win for a Baltimore team that has been dominant at times but hasn't been able to pull away in the tough AFC North.

AP

Cincinnati Bengals safety Jordan Battle (27) tackles Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson (8) in the second half of an NFL football game in Baltimore, Thursday, Nov. 16, 2023.

The Bengals were up 10-7 after Burrow's 4-yard scoring toss to Joe Mixon, but the Ravens answered when Jackson's pass over the middle bounced off linebacker Germaine Pratt and right to receiver Nelson Agholor, who caught the ball in stride and punctuated the 37-yard touchdown with a flip into the end zone.

"He was flying," Jackson said. "That's a Florida boy. We're known for speed."

Jackson threw a 10-yard TD pass to Rashod Bateman with 23 seconds left in the half to put Baltimore up 21-10.

Jake Browning, a 27-year-old backup who had played in only one NFL game, relieved Burrow and was able to guide the Bengals to a field goal to start the second half. But that was all he could manage until he threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Ja'Marr Chase with 1:08 remaining in the game.

Browning was 8 of 14 for 68 yards.

"I felt calm all the time, felt like I threw the ball where I wanted to, but obviously there were too many three-and-outs," Browning said. "Put our defense in a tough situation and I think when Joe goes down I go in the game fully expecting to win."

Jackson threw for 264 yards despite losing Andrews on the first drive of the game.

Gus Edwards bookended Baltimore's day offensively with 3-yard touchdown runs — the first made it 7-0 and the latter 34-13.

Cincinnati won the division the past two years, when late-season injuries kept Jackson off the field for the Ravens. This year Jackson has been able to stay available—he went into the tent after hurting his ankle in the first quarter Thursday but remained in the game—and Baltimore's AFC North rivals are the ones dealing with health issues at quarterback.

Cleveland, which won at Baltimore last weekend to pull within a half-game of first place, lost Deshaun Watson for the season with a fractured shoulder. Now Burrow is dealing with another injury after he faced calf trouble earlier this season.

The Ravens had five sacks, increasing their league-leading total to 44.

The game was delayed briefly because of apparent drone activity around the stadium.

"We saw them up there, drones. That's a first," Harbaugh said. "I thought I'd seen it all with the Super Bowl, the lights going out at the Super Bowl. Now we got drones flying around."

The lights went out during Baltimore's victory over San Francisco in the Super Bowl in New Orleans after the 2012 season.

The Bengals have lost 14 consecutive regular-season night games on the road. Baltimore improved to 20-3 at home in that situation since 2008.

"Our fans were really great," Harbaugh said. "(The Bengals) had to take delay of games, they had a tough time communicating out there. They couldn't get lined up numerous times as a result of the crowd noise."

Wentz is back at work, now as the Rams' backup

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Carson Wentz flew out to sign with the Los Angeles Rams during their bye week last Wednesday and then rushed back home to North Dakota. Several hours later, his wife went into labor and eventually gave birth to their third daughter last Friday.

"It's been a whirlwind," Wentz said. "The whole offseason has been strange for me."

The current week should be a whole lot less dramatic for Wentz, who returned to the West Coast last weekend to start his new job as Matthew Stafford's backup. After being out of the NFL earlier this month, Wentz will be one snap away from playing when the Rams (3-6) host the Seattle Seahawks (6-3) on Sunday.

Wentz spent seven years almost exclusively as an NFL starter whenever healthy, so he is in an unfamiliar role in an unfamiliar place. He is cramming with Sean McVay's playbook and scrambling to get prepared for the opportunity that could present itself soon with the Rams, given Stafford's recent injury history.

"I will say the NFL has a way of humbling everybody," Wentz said. "It's a process, but at the same time, I'm no dummy. I've seen it all. I know how this league works, and I know how last year ended. Didn't play good enough, and so I was aware of what it could be. We all desire to be the guy playing, don't get me wrong. I think everyone would be lying to you if I said different, but we also know our business. It's a hard league, and just to be on a team around the guys is a blessing regardless."

Wentz spent last season with the Washington Commanders, beginning the year as their starter before breaking his finger and losing the job to Taylor Heinecke. Washington acquired him from Indianapolis, where he had spent one productive season after his five-year tenure in Philadelphia ended.

The Commanders released Wentz in February, and he went home and waited to figure out his next step. He kept working out, and he even spent time with former NFL coach Jon Gruden in late summer to stay ready.

"You learn a lot about what you value in life, the things that really matter," Wentz said. "I love this game. I love playing it. It is by no means my everything, (but) I just learned I still want to play, still want to compete, still want to be around guys in the locker room. And especially as I get older, I still feel like there's a lot to offer whether I'm playing or not."

Wentz said he spent most Monday mornings this season evaluating the league with his agent and looking for the right spot to return. It didn't present itself until Stafford injured his thumb last month, and Rams backup Brett Rypien struggled in his place.

Wentz decided he didn't want to wait any longer to get back in the action, and he took the Rams' backup job.

"When it made sense, I said, 'Let's do this thing,'" Wentz said. "I've been kind of craving to get back in the locker room, get back in a football environment. Never really knew what the situation would be like. All offseason, it was kind of weird just waiting and seeing the landscape and everything, but when I knew I had a chance to come here, it just felt right."

Wentz is aware of the impact made by McVay on Baker Mayfield, who was released by Carolina last December with his up-and-down career in turmoil. Mayfield famously signed with the Rams—who needed a starter with Stafford out for the season —and beat the Raiders two days later to begin five straight starts to finish the season.

"Being in the league long enough now and kind of seeing the landscape, always had a lot of respect for coach McVay and how he's done things from afar," McVay said. "I felt like the pieces are in a good place here. And it's the middle off the season. Time's ticking at some point, too."

Mayfield became Tampa Bay's starter this season. Wentz isn't looking that far ahead just yet, and both he and the Rams haven't dismissed the possibility he'll be here longer than this season.

But after the upheaval of his last few seasons and his lengthy stay at home in North Dakota this year, Wentz is just happy to be back in a helmet and preparing for Sundays.

"I don't have to worry about next year," Wentz said. "I don't have to worry about the following years. I can just be where my feet are."

Swimmers, weightlifters start bid for medals

It is now the turn of the NMI swimming and weightlifting teams to compete in the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

The preliminary heats of various swim events kick off Monday morning at the Aquatic Center with Frances Raho the first one to plunge into the pool for the NMI, as she races in the 400m freestyle swim. Julia Jinang is up next for Team Marianas, as she joins Heat 2 for the 100m butterfly. In the men's 100m butterfly event, Team Marianas has three entries in Isaiah Aleksenko (Heat 2), Michael Miller (Heat 1), and Kevin Guerrero Jr. (Heat 3).

The preliminary heats in the swim events will run from 9:30am to 10:45am (8:30am to 9:45am Saipan time), while the finals are scheduled tonight, from 6:30pm to 8:45pm (5:30pm to 7:45pm Saipan Time).

Other swimmers competing for the NMI in the next five days are Taiyo Akimaru, Maria Batallones, Shoko Kimura, Andrew Nunez, Kean Pajarillaga, Moshe Sikkel, Kouke Watanabe, and Juhn Tenorio, who arrived in the Solomon Islands from Japan last Friday.

Swimming is among the sports that offer a lot of medals with participants from 17 countries competing in 40 events.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Team Marianas athletes and officials prepare for the parade of teams in the opening ceremonies for the 2023 Pacific Games Sunday night in Honiara, the Solomon Islands.

Colisao weightlifter to watch

Weightlifting is another medal-rich event in the 2023 Pacific Games with 30 medals (gold, silver, and bronze) at stake in the sport. The NMI's Raymond Santos, who swept the three gold medals in 55-kg class in the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games, will be back on stage as he competes in his weight category at 12:30pm (11:30am Saipan Time) today. Also included in the NMI Weightlifting Team roster are Angel San Nicolas, Leowell Cristobal, Riella Ichiuo, Antonette Labausa, and Joey Colisao.

Colisao is among the weightlifters favored in the competition after topping the 109kg+ and setting personal bests during the recent Oceania Youth, Junior, and U23 Weightlifting Championships in Samoa this year. He joins the company of Fiji flag bearer Taniela Rainibogi, Commonwealth Games champion Don Opeloge of Samoa, and 2019 Pacific Games gold medalist Morea Baru as weightlifters to watch in the men's division.

Tennis, football results

The NMI dropped its first game in the men's tennis team event with Moris Villanueva losing to Vanuatu's Fintan Molbaleh, 4-5 (4), 1-4, and Colim Ramsey falling to Zachary Sands, 2-4, 1-4. Nason Wessel and June Yu foiled Vanuatu's bid for a sweep after downing Jeane Pierre Andrew and Roberto Wong, 4-0, 4-1, in the men's doubles event.

The NMI tennis players will close out pool play in Group A today when it faces Tahiti. The NMI bets need an upset over the top-ranked Tahiti to have a chance to advance to the next round.

In football, the debuting NMI Men's National Team was humbled by Fiji, 0-10. Fijian football legend Roy Khrishna led the favored team with his hat trick—all scored in the first half with the pair made just two minutes apart (sixth and eighth minute). Fiji scored right in the opening minute behind the conversion of Nabil Begg and that dictated the tempo of the one-sided match.

After the loss, NMI head coach Michiteru Mita encouraged his players to bounce back and play better in their next pool play match (against Tahiti on Nov. 24).

"As we conceded that first goal, it was hard for our boys to mentally get back into the game. These early errors made our boys panicked. Now that our boys got this experience—on how the sport is played in the region and in this kind of environment—we have time to adapt for next game," Mita said.

Meanwhile, golf competitions will not be starting until Nov. 22, but Pacific Mini Games gold medalist Zhimin Jin and men's division golfers Franco Santos, Joe Camacho, Joe Sasamoto, and Ben Jones Jr. will have their practice rounds at the Honiara Golf Club today.

Other Team Marianas representatives (in athletics, bodybuilding, triathlon, and va'a) are utilizing their first week of stay in Honiara to continue training for next week's competition. Beach volleyball's Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson will also start their event next week and will arrive in Honiara along with runner Tania Tan on Nov. 25.

Team Marianas delegates joined the more than 5,000 athletes and officials in celebrating the 2023 Pacific Games' opening ceremonies at the National Stadium Sunday night.

Team Marianas' participation in the 2023 Pacific Games is supported by Joeten Daidai Foundation, Triple J, Crowne Plaza Resort, IT&E, IP&E, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Mobil, Tan Holdings, and McDonald's of Guam & Saipan. ***(PR)***

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expects it will be a tough one. He said he actually knows how one of their players, Heimanarii Lai San, plays.

On Saturday evening, the men's soccer team consisting of mostly young student-athletes, debuted in the Pacific Games and fell to world No. 170 Fiji, 0-10. The crowd was electric and it was a full house as it was a battle of mixed cheers for team Fiji and team NMI at the SIFF Academy 1.

A much bigger, faster, and more experienced Fiji team controlled the ball throughout most of the match—with only a few pushes into Fiji's goal by NMI strikers Markus Toves and Tyler Omelau.

A spectator shared he was shocked that Fiji—a team of pro football players managed to score just 10 goals—as the young NMI team displayed great tenacity at defending their goal.

Fiji's star striker Roy Krishina was among those who collected goals with a hat-trick as NMI goalkeeper Merrick Toves was caught off guard with a couple of Fiji's attacks at the net. Emotions were shown but he maintained his composure and made a couple of spectacular jumping saves and held them down to just 10 goals amidst a barrage of attacks by Fiji's main strikers.

NMI's defenders also tried their best to have Toves' back as their main play throughout the match was to defend their goal. Only toward the last few moments of the match did NMI's offense have a couple of opportunities at Fiji's net, but a last-ditch attempt to get NMI on the board by Markus Toves, who was passed the ball by Leland Deleon Guerrero, was a bit way off.

NMI's next game is on Friday, Nov. 24 against Tahiti at 7pm Solomon Islands time and 6pm Saipan time.

Merrick Toves said throughout the match, he was trying to maintain focus and make sure that no more goals get in. "I was also trying to communicate with my teammates and help my team to keep going and to not stop. Also, try to focus every single minute of the game and follow the ball wherever it goes."

As to what was going on his mind after every nipped goal, Toves, who showed emotion on the pitch, said, "As a goalkeeper, me and Christopher Aninzo, (another NMI goalkeeper, but is not part of the Pacific Games team), we try to think how we can do better next time and also try to not let it affect it. At some point in the game, it kind of does affect us and bring us down, but we do try our best to not let that get in our mind, just focus on the game, and try not to let more goals in."

Head coach Michiteru Mita was grateful for the opportunity, the experience and exposure for the young team in their debut in the Pacific.

"It was a great experience. We had a young team play against a strong team, so it was another great international opportunity. We learned a lot and our objective now is to get better and better. We have more games so we just need to keep our heads up and continue to work hard," he said.

As for their debut in the Pacific Games, he said it's a totally new environment. "The tournament format is totally different and so is everything else, but it's a great opportunity for us, as a national team, to play against strong countries. I just appreciate that we are given this opportunity."

Today, swimming and weightlifting kicks off with Piper Raho competing in the 400m freestyle and Ray Santos competing in the 55kg category.

Swimming will run until Nov. 25, while weightlifting is until Nov. 24.

Golf is from Nov. 22 to 25; Beach volleyball is set from Nov. 27 to Dec. 2; bodybuilding is slated on Nov. 27; triathlon is scheduled from Nov. 29 to Dec. 1; va'a is from Nov. 27 to Dec. 1.

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matches, but we bounced back and our young team of men's doubles actually beat Vanuatu—so we're going to take that as a big success for kicking off the tennis tournament with our young squad."

For soccer that was played on Saturday, he said the team played against world-ranked Fiji, and that the NMI team "played their hearts out. They hustled and flew around the field. It's just hard when you're given up about 30 lbs a player and a few inches in height—and then combined with the Fiji team's experience. They were really fun to watch play. Team NMI had had some rough breaks—there were certainly some goals, I think that we could have prevented, but at the same time, we were awfully proud of the way they played."

Throughout the weekend, *Saipan Tribune* caught up with the teams as they settled into their training routines.

For weightlifting, coach Greg Borja said, "Spirits are high as the athletes prepare for their competition. The camaraderie between our athletes and those from other island nations is unique, in that despite being rivals they are supportive and inspirational to each other."

Angel San Nicolas arrived Saturday and Leowell Cristobal arrived yesterday just before the opening ceremony. Weightlifting starts today and ends on Nov. 24.

As for bodybuilding, athlete Christina Tudela said, "The training and facilities so far are good, especially since we established a workout and recovery routine that works well for us."

With how she and teammate Davy Laxa are feeling, she said they are both anxious but eager to compete and get it done. "What we're worried about most is pretty much our diet as our meals haven't been accommodated and thus negatively impacting our nutrition," she said. Bodybuilding is a one-day event on Nov. 27.

Athletics' Greg Igineof said for them, their training is "not that bad. They gave us only an hour to do our training on the track and gym, but it's better than nothing." Sprinter Theodore Rodgers said that the track where they train, which is also the venue, is nice. "The blue track doesn't stain our clothing. It's very hot though because there's no shade. The gym is very nice. There's a lot of weights, water, and waiting space." The team is now waiting for Nathania Tan who is set to arrive on Nov 24. Athletics is slated for Nov. 27 to Dec. 2.

Swimming's coach Richard Sikkel said the team's daily training has been coming on nicely and they're excited for their first day of competition today. However, one team member, Michael Miller, fell ill the last couple of days but has visited the clinic a few times to get treated. He has since been feeling well and will attend the opening ceremony. On how to keep the team healthy, Sikkel said, "Well we had hoped to keep them all healthy, but we just need to continue to go to bed early and eat healthy." Juhn Tenorio arrived last Friday. Swimming will run until Nov. 25.

For golf, Franco Santos said their training has been great. "Weather is very similar to Saipan which means the humidity is a factor to our game play as we are walking the entire course. We have been going to the driving range on a daily basis until our competition begins. The course is coming together. The staff is working hard to get the course to its best condition before the competition begins. Tomorrow, we start our actual practice round with the other countries. It's going to be interesting as we will pair up with other countries during the practice rounds." Golf is from Nov. 22 to 25.

Va'a's manager/athlete Justin Andrew, for his team's part, said that their training has been going well. "Thank God we came a little early because the team is now acclimated and getting used to the schedule. The venue is coming together—we've been there a couple of times… we have a young team here with us. I'm so glad we have a young team. They adapt very well and very quickly—so, I think we'll do well." Va'a is from Nov. 27 to Dec. 1.

Triathlon's lone wolf Leo Wania said he trains with the swim team in the pool and he's got to take a look at the bike and running route. Wania undertakes a 400m swim, then a 10km bike, and tops it off with a 2.5km run. Triathlon is scheduled from Nov. 29 to Dec. 1.

Beach volleyball's two athletes, Andrew Johnson and Logan Mister, are coming in next week, but coach Tyce Mister and team manager Chris Nelson have already taken a look at the training grounds and venue. Beach volleyball is set from Nov. 27 to Dec. 2.

Towns' floater in final seconds sends T'wolves to win over Pelicans.

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Junior netters salvage win in doubles

» Soccer team settles for 0-10 loss

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

LEIGH GASES
NMI junior netters Nason Wessel, right, and June Yu during their doubles game against Vanuatu, last Friday in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

HONIARA, Solomon Islands—The NMI Men's National Tennis Team and the NMI Men's National Soccer Team were the first to see some action for the delegation last Friday and Saturday before the official start of the 2023 Pacific Games.

Tennis' first match was a team matchup against Vanuatu's singles and doubles team on a bright and sunny Hapi Islands weather at the tennis courts in the main sports complex of the Games.

Despite not having a bite of lunch yet and battling the raging heat, junior netters Nason Wessel and June Yu put on a show and in less than 30 minutes, shut down Vanuatu's Jean Pierre Andre and Roberto Wong, 4-0, 4-1, to snag a win in the doubles men's match.

Wessel and Yu's chemistry on the court surprised even their coach and the opposing team as Wessel's strong serves and Yu's well-placed and accurate returns complemented each other well to end the match quickly and not leave the first day of matches empty handed.

In the singles matches earlier in the morning, Moris Villanueva lost to Fintan Malbaleh, 4-5, 1-4, and playing coach Colin Ramsey fell to Zachary Sands, 2-4, 1-4, for a 1-2 overall loss in the team tennis matches last Friday.

Villanueva started off strong against the young 16-year-old, as it was a tug-of-war of points throughout the first set, but Malbaleh came bouncing back in the last set to finish off a clearly exhausted Villanueva.

For Ramsey, his matchup against Sands was a tough one as Sands had a strong serve that popped up sharply each time which got the better of Ramsey. The matches were played in short sets and Ramsey could not adjust quickly enough to make a comeback.

After the match, Ramsey said that the boys are happy to come out and play, and he's happy to see it. He said Wessel and Yu controlled their doubles match and "they didn't feel any pressure against Vanuatu which historically has a really good record against us, so I'm pretty elated that the boys got to experience that. They got to notch their first win from their first competition and I think that's awesome. And with Moris, I know he has that grinder mentality where he's not going to give up 'til that last point."

On his own performance, Ramsey said, "Obviously, there were some nerves going into the competition. I think everybody feels that, but I am definitely better equipped than I was before to deal with those. I thought I played really well—really solid from back and from the net. There was nothing that he had that really scared me and that just kind of gives me confidence going forward, even though I came out with a loss. I'm feeling very good about where I'm at."

For Wessel and Yu, they said the experience of their first Pacific Games has been good so far and they felt great after winning their match. Wessel said, "I feel like we did pretty good in the doubles and I'm looking forward to the singles matches."

Villanueva, who hasn't competed on the big stage in a while said, "It was really great. To be honest, I did not feel a lot of pressure. I just went out there to learn and take what I can get from different countries and I feel like I've been learning a lot these past few days."

He added, "Vanuatu's a tough team. They're very well-funded in terms of tennis… we kind of don't have as much as they do, but I'm glad we get to at least compete even if we don't have our A-Team right now."

The tennis team is competing against No. 1 seed Tahiti today and Ramsey

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LEIGH GASES
NMI's Leland Deleon Guerrero falls during a play against a Fiji attacker t their debut in the Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands last Saturday night

Team NMI pushes through in Honiara despite challenges

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

HONIARA, Solomon Islands—Team NMI showed their resiliency as a people everywhere they go and even more so in the South Pacific's Hapi Islands—where internet connectivity is sparse and creature comforts that the team is used to back home is at a minimum—if anything at all.

Even with the many challenges from the huge undertaking of the Solomon Islanders hosting the Games for the first time, Nick Gross, the team's chef de mission, provided some updates on the team yesterday morning before the opening ceremony and said that the team is "resilient" and pushing through.

"Everybody's getting situated and getting used to village life as it is. The first 48 hours were certainly a little hectic in transportation and making sure that the team has what it needs to perform at its highest. But it's to be expected, right?"

In the athletes village in the Solomon Islands National University Kukum, where the NMI delegation is designated, there are over 1,000 athletes. Overall, there are about 5,000 athletes from 24 Pacific Island nations competing in 24 sports.

LEIGH GASES
Team NMI's chef de mission Nick Gross speaks in a manager/coach's meeting yesterday morning before the opening ceremony of the Pacific Games in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

As for the team's spirit and outlook before opening of the Games, with Gross in communication with each of the 10 team's managers and coaches, he said, "By and large, we have a very young team here. The vast majority of our athletes are under 25years old. For many of them, this is the first time that they've competed in the Pacific Games, so I think the experience in and of itself can be overwhelming at times. The frustrations of coming from such a developed Northern Marianas to a place like the Solomons, you know, every day is a new day for the Solomons and the organizing committee with the different barriers that are coming up and the things that are making things difficult."

"I think that team Marianas so far has been very resilient and done a great job of kind of rolling with everything. I thank the coaches and the managers again for holding that together and making sure that their athletes understand the complexities of something as big as the Pacific Games. And, I'm just excited to see them all get out there and have the opportunity to compete," he said.

On his thoughts about the first two teams—soccer and tennis—that played last Friday and Saturday, he said, "Our men's tennis team, everybody expects absolutely the best of the best of the best from the Northern Marianas, and this year, we brought a younger squad. Unfortunately, in both of our men's singles we lost our

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